THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHILD

E. H. COOPER

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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHILD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

"WYEMARKE'S MOTHER"

"WYEMARKE AND THE SEA-FAIRIES"

"MR. BLAKE OF NEWMARKET"

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHILD

By
EDWARD H. COOPER

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PREFACE

I HAVE understood, from a proverb to that effect, that "bachelors' wives and old maids' children" are objects of much scorn to the experienced married person and parent; but no one has ever said a word in condemnation of bachelors' children. Another proverb which intimates that lookers-on see most of the game may apparently be applied to their case.

A large number of children—the majority, I suppose—confide everything about themselves to their parents, and nothing about their parents or home to anybody else. A certain number of others confide everything about their home and their parents to some outside friend, and regard all their guardians as quaint specimens of natural history, rather liable to bite, most comfortable at a distance, but quite interesting topics for conversation with intimate friends. The former and more common kind of home-life one watches with love and envy, but with no more intimate comprehension than may come from memories of one's own childhood. From youngsters

of the latter class one can learn everything that it is possible to know about a child of this kind of either sex and every age.

In excuse for the defects of this book, which, of course, are many, I can only suggest that its general tendency must be to give slightly undue prominence to the minority of children who do not lead a purely normal home-life.

One other word I want to add. The stories of children's humour in these pages are quite genuine for the simple reason that I hate taking any trouble, and it is so much easier to tell real child-stories than to make them up that I have adopted the former course.

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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHILD

CHAPTER I.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHILD.

THE question, "Do you like children?" takes high rank in my mind among the foolish remarks of daily life. Men and women who entertain the more agreeable of their contemporaries, cultivating the society of royalties, millionaires, actors, peers, or ladies of the ballet, as the fancy takes them, are not asked, "Do you like grown-up people?" Every one has his kindred spirit, to be found in a body now two feet high and now six feet, and he likes the spirit when found. The person who tells me that he detests all children means either that he has never spoken to a child in sympathy with himself, or that he hates a creature who beats a toy

drum, or most often of all he means to assure me that he himself is a grown-up man, in spite of my obvious suspicion to the contrary. Childhood even wears different aspects under different names. Call it raw immaturity, and the professional cynic, who knows all things, and hopes very little and believes very little and fears very little, will scoff at it; call it youth, and the world spends itself in a sigh of covetous longing. I find it hard to believe in some universal essential spirit of childhood, some *ewig kindliche*, dressed here in furs, skirts or feathers, there in pig-tails, patched trousers, bangles or fez caps, sometimes a year old and sometimes sixteen, but with the gist of the matter always present so that I can love or hate it. Innocence, faith, wonder, joy, reverence, these are common to all ages; while many a thousand children lack them all. The story of one child-life may be spiritual beyond the power of human words to tell, a book of faith and innocence written in white on white; the thoughts and daily life of another could be adequately described only by the dullest and most rigidly realistic pen. What have these two types in common which shall enable me to answer the question, "Do you like children?"

If one studies the friends—not the chance acquaintances, but the intimate friends—of any man or woman, one will mostly find a strong common characteristic among all of them, young and old, rich and poor; and any new-comer of any age who possesses this characteristic has a good chance of being admitted into the friendly circle. A woman of my acquaintance, grown up to the extent of twenty-six years, a shining star in a social set whose motto was "The world goes fast, but we go faster," chose her intimate friends (unconsciously enough, I daresay, as a nerve sedative) according to their possession of some wit coupled with a power of sitting in motionless but expressive silence for unlimited hours. Naturally enough, therefore, she had a well-earned reputation for disliking all children, till one day at a children's party of mine she encountered a four-year-old lady whose method of showing displeasure at all the mishaps of life was to affect total inability to speak or hear. "I never saw any one pretend so well," said an admiring elder sister, whose account of the business I may perhaps be allowed to reproduce: "When she is spoken to she looks up at the person quite quietly, like a baby beginning

to take notice, and as if she had no more idea than a French baby what the person who was talking to her meant. Then if nurse or anyone gets angry, Kitty looks at them in a puzzled, helpless sort of way, as if she were a little frightened, and rather wondered what all the fuss was about. She doesn't seem to care a bit if she has dry bread for tea, or no sugar, and if she is sent to bed she likes it; so now when she has got a fit like this every one is perfectly helpless, and simply lets her alone, and they are all afraid of doing anything to get her into one of her states. Once when nurse shook her, and another time when Jim pulled her hair to make her speak, she only looked at them quite silently, and her lips pouted out, and her big blue eyes got all wet with tears, and you would think there never was such an ill-used child in England before. But me and Marjorie laughed."

Such a form of wit completely vanquished the elder visitor, who for the next few months "disliked all children except one," and then added another slow-speaking humorist to her list of friends. As a rule, however, the child who sits on nursery or drawing-room chairs in motionless, philosophic silence, a wise and

solid Sphinx looking out over the desert of human life, dissecting human motives, criticising silently all human speech and action, is an embarrassing person to deal with. It is a happy belief of many self-respecting men and women that the Sphinx in question is silent with admiration when they are present, and motionless from resolve to make the most of such an opportunity for absorbing wisdom and learning. It is my own highest hope that the Sphinx thinks me at worst rather queer, and perhaps capable of better things.

The "rabble and rout" of babes of both sexes and all ages who form my own "set" have certain qualities in common. Without fully accepting the description of a (rare and unwilling) fellow-guest, that they are "a swarm of shrieking, stone-throwing, skirt-dancing, practical-joke-playing imps of mischief, ready to make three halves of any one who comes near them, and, like the much-quoted prophet Habakkuk, *capable de tout*," I must admit some preference for the child who speaks when it is spoken to and sometimes when it is not. Shyness is not charming when it is the curtain of a vacuum, and in any case a little of it

goes a long way in my mind. Downcast eyelids are very pretty if they are lifted up to display laughing, all-comprehending eyes; nervously trembling lips are delightful when they are controlled at last to form the words of an epigram; and it adds great zest to the softly whispered good-night and drowsy kisses of a little cherub-faced person of ten, to know that directly you have left the room the cherub will be out of bed, with a wet sponge and a brush, making the lives of room-companions a burden unless they get up and share some sinful escapade. Good behaviour is commendable but monotonous, and it can at least be said for my private circle of friends that they are insupportable to the nerves sometimes, confounding to the brain often, but dull never. In truth most of them seem to recognise that dullness, like the German description of poverty, is "not a crime, but ten times worse." I remember one lady at the age of four complaining of the repetition every day of the same prayers: "God must think me so stupid to say the same thing again and again;" and another earnestly defending a small companion who was accused (most unjustly) of "waiting quietly" to know if she could go out. "Oh,

no," said her champion, "she's in the hall, *waiting fast.*"

Critics of the new cult of the child are heard occasionally to express a wish that their own sayings and doings had been treasured carefully by admiring friends, which sayings would be found, they allege, to be quite as clever as those quoted from the nurseries of the twentieth century. Regretfully and apologetically I doubt it. Even during the past ten or twelve years a close observer must have noticed the increasingly rapid development of the nursery intellect, a development which has taken place, perhaps, at the expense of physique, but is not the less noticeable for that. The child of to-day thinks more, knows more, questions more, talks a hundred times more than its contemporary fifteen years ago; it is a yet more advanced being than the child in whose company I viewed Christmas trees and did lessons twenty-five years ago. Laws of growth and change do not spare the spirit of the nursery any more than they spare its individuals. The reason for this particular change is very obvious. Fifty years ago children were unknown in society life; a hundred years ago they were unknown in

any grown-up life at all. It has always seemed to me that if it were possible to suggest a blunder in 'Esmond,' that incomparable masterpiece of the greatest novelist of Europe, one might hint that the continual presence of the little Beatrix and Frank with their parents, and among their parents' guests, is improbable. They lived, I am sure, on an upper floor in a far-off wing of Castlewood Hall, seeing only their mother and a few women specially appointed to their charge. They were not very happy, and were direfully and dreadfully —though, let us hope, unconsciously—dull. Their toys and books were few, their friends fewer, and among their friends they saw a good deal of parental neglect and cruelty. The warmest admirer of the "good old times" would, I imagine, excuse the children of the upper classes from desiring to return to the life and customs of these predecessors. And such a life did not tend towards brilliancy of speech. This is the property of the children who swarm round one at London "At Homes" and country garden parties, whom one is allowed to take to Hurlingham, Brighton, and garden parties at the Zoo, who sell at bazaars, distribute programmes

at charity concerts, and bicycle in the Park instead of walking in Belgravian gardens. I call to mind one such young person now, a little maid of fourteen, clever, witty, beautiful to behold, a first-class cricketer, an admirable actress, reciter, and athlete, a business lady of high qualifications. I remember an occasion when she was given a batch of programmes to sell at a charity entertainment, and, the programmes being marked two shillings each, she returned with a sum representing their sale at an average price of three shillings and eightpence. Being asked to explain her methods she said simply: "I just had a good look at the people and asked any price, from one shilling to five shillings, which I thought they could pay. Sometimes I made a mistake, but mostly I didn't." Picture the fearful joy, the wonder, admiration, and envy with which such a child would have been regarded by her contemporaries fifty years ago! Her life, with its running accompaniment of witty comment and naive questions, is new, and I doubt if the most carefully-kept records of the youth of my own generation would show a tenth part of its conscious or unconscious humour.

Another new feature in the child-life of

to-day is productive of much original thought and ideas. Social rush and restlessness, harrying the enfeebled bodies bequeathed to us by the drunkards and gluttons who did us the honour of becoming our great-grandfathers, have filled modern nurseries with disease. Many of these new maladies—neurasthenia, for instance, and all its accompaniments—are probably an inevitable accompaniment of increased intelligence; but others could easily be rectified. A man or woman who really likes children—or to be precise, whose circle of friends includes many small folk — will be endlessly discreet in all dealings with them, will study nursery hygiene as they study society etiquette, will offer no tempting, unwholesome food, no amusements at late hours or in hot buildings, no prolonged excitement or doubtful sights, and will keep strict silence about all illness. Above all they will tolerate no fashionable invalid talk. One must, of course, read the *Lancet* regularly in order to be equipped for modern dinner-table conversation; but gossip culled from *Little Folks* is more profitable at the nursery tea-table. A sick child who has once realised from the conversation of its elders that they are seriously concerned

about its maladies, must be an idiot if at the end of a week it is not the Great Panjandrum of the nursery and practical ruler of the house. Governesses, nurses, guardians of every kind can hope at best to retreat in good order. "Jack isn't ever to get tired, and he's getting tired now," says a small person who is becoming bored with the morning walk, pointing to her brother; and that walk is at an end. In the middle of a weary arithmetic lesson accusing fingers are pointed at the governess, accusing voices exclaim: "Eileen's going to cry! Sir Thomas Barlow says Eileen's never to cry." Eileen takes the hint, fumbles in her pocket to see if haply it contains something which will do duty for a handkerchief, and there is no more arithmetic. The follies and crimes, too, of which a person—especially, I dare to think, a woman—can and will be guilty who entertains children because it is the fashion, are "wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful, and yet again wonderful, and after that out of all whooping." The unfortunate little creatures who have the misfortune to be her guests are treated like mechanical toys, which are required to perform once and may then be thrown away. They must open round

eyes of amazement and delight at the magnificence of this particular party, admire their hostess, say a few funny things expressive of excited pleasure, have too much of everything; and go back to the nursery to be as ill as they please. One may see supper-tables at a children's party which differ in no respect from those of a smart ball in a millionaire's house except that the champagne-cup is made of cheap and bad champagne. In the common sense of the babes themselves lies the chief hope of safety; many of them are luckily proud of being dieted. Even the proffer of a box of sweets is not always received with enthusiasm. If you love many children and want their company, you will do well to remember that in the end these young folk, no less than their guardians, will genuinely prefer the person and house where joys are safe, where fun does not end in a riot and tears, where everything on the tea or supper-tables can be eaten without fear or disfavour, where in effect the whole situation is in the tight grasp of a man or woman who loves not only well but wisely.

And I, who love untold scores of little folk, creatures of three and four, of fifteen and sixteen, cheeky schoolboys at Westgate,

polite epigrammatic dinner-guests at Eton, riotous sea-side visitors, inhabitants of spinal carriages with all the qualifications for rioters except one, pink-cheeked little maidens in London nurseries, babes English, French, Finlander, American, Italian, and German— I sit by the way-side and, the stars being too far off, ask no more of Fate than to watch this procession moving out of life's morning with faces set towards the noon-day. Times change, always for the better ; the old order changes, giving place to a better ; we need lament no change, nor spare the idlest regret for past child-fashions and laws, but go on falling in love with each new small thing which stands in the dawn, and pray the Eternal Pity to look down most mercifully on its journey.

Chapter II.

WANTED, A NEW GUARDIAN.

AN eight-year-old lady, who honours me with her friendship, came to tea with me one day recently, and being offered a choice of toys to play with afterwards, chose unhesitatingly the typewriter. Such a decision is indeed invariable among her contemporaries, to whom all walking dolls, jumping snakes, steam-engines, and even a bath full of floating fishes and miniature fishing nets wherewith to catch them, are slight fleeting joys compared to this wonderful machine which prints your thoughts by mysterious invisible clicks, and then suddenly displays them (and a good deal of extraneous lettering with them) to your admiring eyes. My present guest elected to write a story, and the mysteries of "spacing" having been explained to her, and some experimental words written, a small curly head and pursed-up lips and serious eyes were bent over the typewriter for ten or fifteen minutes. Then

I was shown the result; which was, however, rather the beginning of an essay on life, or of a new volume of philosophy, than of a story. The words, correctly spaced and spelt, were simply: "A sad life it is here, it may be better soon," and the small face was looking shyly up at me, scarlet with the pride of composition.

The author's home, parents, governess and nurses being all ideally perfect, I do not think that this brief but comprehensive philosophic treatise meant, in her case, anything worse than the advent of bed-time, or (if she were looking yet farther forward) of arithmetic day. The little lady held with Emerson that there is something wrong with a person's brain who likes mathematics, and an approaching conflict with this loathsome and despicable science could cast a gloom over many previous hours. But the sentence, staying irrationally in my mind, as chance words will, has seemed to me at last to form rather a large and serious indictment against some of the conditions of modern young life, drawn up by this lady on behalf of her contemporaries. She, herself, as I have said, is personally unconcerned in the case, as a counsel for the prosecution should

be. She gets up at half-past seven, goes to bed at seven, spends ten months of the year in the country, and for preference during her leisure reads fairy books—to herself, you understand, with small lips murmuring the words, and one ridiculously small finger pointing along the line, and an occasional toss of the head when tiresome curls obscure her sight. Her judgment is very sound—could I say less when she professes a warm admiration for my fairy books ?—and I would not give a farthing for a book, toy, man, woman, or child whom she condemned as vulgar or silly. So it is that her indictment of the era, formulated on behalf of her generation, has weight with me ; and as I look round on certain modern nurseries full of nervous children, satiated with amusement, puzzling their own way through life with only a constantly-changing and carelessly-chosen nurse and governess to guard their minds and bodies and souls, I see that if the baby critic wished to call witnesses for her case she would not have far to seek. I have it in my mind now to enlarge somewhat upon her text, always premising that my remarks are limited strictly throughout to the children of busy women of the wealthy classes. There

is an unreasonable belief prevalent, even in quite enlightened countries, that nursery affairs are exclusively the concern of women. This Eastern superstition becomes the more ridiculous when one looks round and sees that in a large portion of all classes of society it is the mother, aunt, or feminine friend who permits and encourages every sort of silly indulgence, late hours, abstention from school, general unpunctuality and grown-up amusements; while the father or male guardian insists on regular school attendance, punctuality, and such sane amusements as cricket-matches and the Zoological Gardens. During a period which included the first few months of the South African war, *i.e.*, when the absence of male guardians would be perceptibly felt in London, the average attendance at evening continuation classes under the London School Board decreased, and the percentage of average attendance on the average roll in the ordinary schools also decreased; while, in another class of life, is there not a regular family quarrel at the beginning of every school term between the man who insists that his children shall go back to Winchester, or Paris, or Cheltenham on the right day, and the woman who asserts

that their colds are not well or their clothes not ready? The idea that women are infallible and best left alone in their judgment of nursery affairs is mediæval and oriental nonsense; and in these days when women assert (and very clearly prove) that they can do what used to be thought men's work, men-folk need surely have no hesitation in making such a counter-claim as I now suggest.

The nursery world, like Gaul according to Cæsar, may be divided into three parts, which extend through all classes of society: (1) neglected children; (2) actively ill-treated children, and (3) children who are tended to the very best of their parents' ability. Cynics, I am told, profess to confound the second and third of these divisions, but as both divisions are outside the scope of this chapter we need not argue the point. A mother's tender care can indeed produce some extremely alarming consequences to mind and body, and if you like cheap sarcasm, you can probably lay a finger on a score of persons who are hopelessly sickly or irredeemably wicked for life owing to parental solicitude, and you may pass an hour in easy jesting about the system. Yet, taken as a whole,

this careful English home-life cannot be described as a conspicuous failure in the world's history. Occasionally a parent, with erratic theories about education, has twisted some young mind all awry; a half-witted man, out of his mind with vanity, has wearied his children, and wasted valuable years of their life by preaching some ill-digested, idiotic doctrine to them; a woman with medical theories and a medicine-chest has killed and maimed one or two members of her family before her husband has time to interfere; or the children are forced to live solely with the companionship of grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins who are dull, half-witted, uneducated bores, saturated with dreary country-village scandal, and without an intelligent interest in any subject in the world. You see blunders; but much more widely and frequently you see the long successful years of this happy English home-life, the generations of men and women, pure, strong-limbed, high-minded, cultivated, brave, who emerge from it to rule one half of the outside world and extort unwilling admiration from the other half. Even among the blunders, among parents who are pains-taking, well-intentioned imbeciles, it is extra-

ordinary how little real lasting damage is done. Perhaps conspicuous good intentions are in themselves worth something in the scheme of education; maybe the honesty which is mostly obvious in such persons counterbalances their injustice and shows it to the children as the result of mere stupidity; perhaps one parent is sane and strong-minded, or good-natured relatives interfere and insist on school. However it may be, kindly Providence mostly arranges the rescue of the brood and gives them their chance. Sometimes it forgets altogether, but not often, and the exceptions may mitigate their anger by reflecting that they are no worse off than actively ill-treated children. With regard to these latter I have equally little to say here. Laws, which are becoming every year more numerous and more strict, deal with their hard lot to a great extent, and the splendid work of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is proving yearly to parents with greater emphasis that the active ill-treatment of children is a very costly and dangerous business in all classes of society. The gentleman who sends his son up a drain in search of a favourite pigeon, and applies lighted matches to the boy's feet

when he asserts that he can get no further, finds with surprise that his plea—"It was my own son, your worship"—is regarded by the magisterial mind as an aggravation of his offence; the woman who is guardian to a ten-year-old owner of a fortune, which is to come to the guardian if the child dies, and who accordingly sets to work to kill the child by prolonged cruelty, finds, to her wrathful amazement, that in the house which was her grandfather's inviolable castle she is an object of keen, disrespectful and pressing attention from the ubiquitous officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Very possibly the work might be done faster and better; that is a matter of money: but it is being done fast and well, and needs no recommendation from me. After this long list of matters which I do not propose to discuss, I come to the one which I do.

If some virtues are new all vices are old, as a philosophic story-writer remarked when loaded dice were discovered at Pompeii; and the neglect of children by otherwise quite amiable parents is a very old story. Men and women who are too occupied with amusement to see or notice a child from month's end to month's end form a perma-

nent class, whose numbers may or may not be increasing, but always have been and always will be considerable. Lately, however, there has been added to this another class, far larger and most unmistakably and rapidly increasing, of women who, without strict necessity, on behalf of a cause or a charity, to earn more money or assert liberty, for the sake of pleasure, profit or advertisement, or for a score of other reasons, good, bad and indifferent, have plunged into work and become completely absorbed in it. Isolated examples of such absorbed women workers, who are labouring from choice and not from necessity, have of course always existed. Dickens was very fond of caricaturing them, and apparently thought nothing too rude to say about them. Mrs. Jellaby in 'Bleak House,' as described by that dreadful young person Esther Summerson, is to my mind one of the few pieces of witless, unredeemed vulgarity in his books. But I do not think that I am misusing words when I speak of such workers to-day as a new class, for they have been multiplied by ten thousand within the last few years, and are rapidly changing many of the social and economic conditions of English life. They

have taken with grateful hands the liberty which has been won for them hardly and sternly by still living workers; they do not mean to misuse such liberty in "having a good time"; but neither, on the other hand, have they had time to fit in their new labours with the old-fashioned ones, which they do not wish to ignore, but which they cannot wedge in between a score of other important appointments. Committee meetings, literary and scientific tasks, meals, dressmakers' business and social engagements can be, and, in several cases which I know, are combined with managing a nursery and superintending the rest of the household, but it is not a day's work which the average person would care to repeat three hundred times a year. I should not. Once, while rather busy, I was left for some days with a six-year-old person, so I know what happens. A nurse bathed and dressed the creature in the morning, and at intervals during the day dusted it and did its hair; but otherwise I was in sole charge. First she complained of "eternal" pains, and when I had diagnosed these to mean internal pains of a trifling character, and promised (preserved) ginger at lunch if the sufferer was good for the rest

of the morning, she posed me and claimed half an hour of time by profound questions about original sin. Later still, when the necessity of finishing a certain task had become rather pressing for me, my little miss remarked casually (her temporary residence being at the seaside): "I'm going out to paddle; please keep an eye on me"; and a prolonged tempest followed my demonstration of the impossibility of this proceeding. Finally came her evening prayers, which meant an hour of stern and intricate theological argument. And at the end of the day it did strike me that if I were this lady's mother, engaged in scientific studies or political intrigues, either the studies and intrigues or the lady would have to go to the wall.

The difficulty of doing two women's work is no lighter than the difficulty, about which my sex complains, of doing two men's; and it is not likely obligingly to disappear from this case. Neither is it, I imagine, at all likely that modern women will suddenly return *en masse* to the mediæval occupations of jam-making, embroidery, tea-parties and child-nurture, any more than I myself propose to return to the occupations of the same

period, *i.e.*, to put on a helmet and sword and go forth to dispute with Messrs. Cook and Son the possession of Palestine. I do not despise jam and I love child-prattle, but when I hear a totally uneducated young gentleman, who has idled through five years at Harrow and three at Oxford, telling his sister or sweetheart that these two matters, varied by a little dressmakers' business, are their proper occupations in life, I marvel that the young women do not box his ears. When lecturers and writers, male and female, preach sermons on the same text I take time to consider which is the more wonderful, the stupidity and impudence of the preachers or the toleration of their audience. The future of marriage and population in this country is certainly a very serious matter if these preachers are to be believed, and a highly-educated, highly-cultivated woman is by her marriage to abandon valuable work, or even make it subservient to a cook with whims or a child with measles. A man coming to some girl who is fresh from the lecture-rooms of Cheltenham and Cambridge, and proposing to make her a sort of combined housekeeper, monthly nurse, dressmaker's model, sick nurse and hostess of his dinner

parties, is likely to be sent about his business with scant politeness. Love has been a dominant influence in the lives of young women for many generations, because, except in a few rare cases, it has had no rival; but a passion for work is a very serious rival, and if the other influence is to be handicapped by such penalties it will hardly be included, if I may be permitted a lapse into the picturesque parlance of Newmarket, as a "probable starter" among the influences of life, and will be knocked out in the betting to "1000 to 1 offered."

Without exactly putting forward my own experiences as typical, I suppose no one is concerned to deny that two healthy intelligent children can distribute attentions which will furnish most ample employment for a mother, governess, nurse, and nursery-maid; and that an average woman who is occupied with scientific work, political juggling, literary undertakings, charitable management, and a host of social duties besides, with an occasional nervous breakdown to complicate matters, cannot possibly give proper attention to these children. If she is extremely fond of them, she will give up a portion of her work or

pleasure for their benefit; but if she prefers her political *salon*, novel-writing, charity committees, Ascot, Henley, Goodwood, Scotch shooting-box, yachting trips, and month at Monte Carlo, I cannot conceive why she, any more than her husband, should abandon these in order to give the children their Bible lesson or see that their rice puddings are properly cooked. I myself like the latter occupations—for a few days at any rate—but my young Cambridge neighbour prefers the Differential Calculus, and the young and beautiful Duchess of A—— prefers to play at making and unmaking Cabinets in London and Washington. Grave Ambassadors and Ministers pace the lawns of A—— Castle, whispering toy secrets to her, asking with admirably grave faces what she thinks about Russia's designs in China. Would you have her dismiss them all and risk a European war in order to play spillikins with May in the nursery and hear about Jack's first battle with the Eton Latin Grammar? One woman will manage both the secrets and the spillikins, but the other says she can't and won't; and (unless you assert roundly that in marrying she is once for all to place all other interests second to

her maternal ones) who has any right to make her try ?

Nobody, I think ; but she might take some measures to safeguard these babes. One cannot, as I venture to think, in reason protest against the mathematicians and the politicians marrying, because, granted that they are perfectly healthy persons, the world will be worse for it if some portion of their brains, beauty, or other advantages are not transmitted to another generation. Neither can one force them to care for their children more than for any other interest or amusement. In point of fact, you have only to pay visits in a dozen country houses, or lunch, dine, and have tea in a score of London houses, in order to discover that, to a considerable number of busy women, children are simply a nuisance ; while to many others they are mere playthings, pretty ornaments for the back seat of a carriage, amusing toys to relieve the *ennui* of a tea party, picturesque additions to the costume in which the hostess receives the Princess or the desirable millionaire. I stop there for the moment, and say nothing here about the women who have their children taught *risqué* dances and songs for the amusement of

afternoon callers. We will refer to them later ; though really, since the rash and foolish abolition of the ducking-stool, there is no cure for persons of this description. I am merely now demanding guardians for the child of the student and business woman and reputable pleasure-seeker.

A nurse is very often a most sensible and charming person, and in that case her guardianship for a few years leaves nothing to be desired. She is extremely practical. When she hands her small charges over to me at the Zoological Gardens, she does not vaguely request me to take great care of them, but gives brief specific directions about each. "Miss Alice wants to go and paddle with the penguin in the pond ; please don't let her. Master Jack always tries to shake hands with the chimpanzee ; please stop him. Miss Kate says she wants to go into the cage and play with the cobra, because it looked at her so kindly last time she was here ; please hold her hand in the snake-house." The babes will tell you reassuringly that they were only "funning," but their nurse knows better. When she reads aloud she goes straight ahead through fairies, escapes, disappearances, wrecks, desert

islands, philosophic reflections, and historical allusions, so that her small hearers can attach to each incident an explanation evolved from their own strange little minds, and so treble the wonders of the story. I liked the candour of a seven-year-old listener, who said to a too explanatory story-teller: "Oh, do go on! I can understand so much better when you don't explain." The confiding simple mind of this kindly soul is a very restful change from the drawing-room world. When one of her nurslings goes to school for his first term, and having lost a shilling in a bet, and also been tossed in a blanket, writes to her that, "The schoolroom is a gambling-hell and my dormitory is a torture-chamber," she weeps in sympathy, and sees to it that the next hamper is full of balm for such woes. I have heard complaints made of the grammar and pronunciation affected by her charges after prolonged residence with her and a nursery-maid; but small people have in fact a resolute preference for this style of speech, only equalled by their readiness to drop it suddenly and completely later on. It was a lady who, throughout her four years of life had been surrounded by careful and adoring relations, who announced

to her fellow stall-holders at a bazaar: "I've tooked six pound and I'm awful 'ungry." It was this person, or an equally cared-for relation, who, during a stay at Southsea, told us that she and her nursery-maid had "bin to Paartsmouth," where "it was bilin' 'ot." But a well-chosen nurse, with her attendants, approaches so near to perfection that her government, even without superintendence, for the first six or seven years of her charges' life, cannot safely be replaced. Do not all of us know such a person, with strong, steady face, and quiet, firm voice which seems to begin all sentences with "dearie," and arms which seem to be always round some one, and eyes which are magnets to draw all children to her side?

Unfortunately, however, her powers have limits. Her babes become animated notes of interrogation ranging over the whole field of theology, physiology, social etiquette, and ancient and modern history, and it is but occasionally that they can be distracted now by offers to make toffee, or silenced by "that's not for a little boy to know." New theories and new lessons are introduced to her charges; overwhelming quantities of new amusements, which the woman has no

authority to refuse, are offered to them, and merely create a demand for more; new maladies called "nervous," but affecting no nerves with which she has ever been acquainted, invade her nursery and defy her remedies; she becomes in her own language "flustered" and requests a conference with the mother, who sends for her accordingly while dressing for a State Concert, and says that she can now spare half an hour. The conference over, the woman—much the wiser, do you think?—goes back to her ten-year-old nursling, who during the past week has been at three garden parties with her mother, two children's dances, two natural history lectures, and a theatre, has acted in some theatricals, been bridesmaid to a cousin, sold at a bazaar this afternoon, danced this evening to amuse some guests of her mother's who arrived early before dinner, and is now lying in bed, sleepless, crying, deadly tired, complaining of hunger, headache, and half-a-dozen other pains. What would you have? The mother has compressed ten, twenty times that amount of entertainment into the same week, and addressed or presided over half a score of political meetings besides. She will come up to the nursery to-morrow

if she has time ; the child must have a tonic or see a doctor if she is really unwell, and go to Westgate for a week if she is tired. Two or three ladies at the concert have heard the story and have sympathised and given advice. Mrs. A. has recommended a new doctor. Every one, you understand, is anxious to do right and is being as kind as possible. But time is short, and calls on it are many. To suggest cruelty or wrong-doing in connection with this commonplace story is ridiculous. The mother and father have simply neither time nor inclination to study the extremely intricate phenomena of the nursery.

No one, however, themselves least of all, would deny that they owe some care and consideration to these young lives. To choose a nurse, and watch her behaviour carefully at first till it is obvious that she is trustworthy, takes time and trouble, but as the result is to last, with good luck, for a considerable period, no one need, or probably does, grudge the time and trouble. The next stage is, I humbly venture to think, a failure. Private governesses and tutors, whether they come by the day or as residents, are nowadays brilliantly educated

women and men, intimately acquainted with and capable of teaching more subjects than I know the names of. English education has had its dark days; but I should think that, to-day, few except the most discontented critics would deny that it is equal to German education, and that the two systems are very easily first in the world. But in proportion as a teacher's work improves, his or her sphere of labour must contract. Their work, like all other good work, becomes specialised, their exact status in the house and family becomes more decidedly fixed, and their pay increases. You can find a hundred ladies to teach your little maid astronomy, Latin, logic, and other modern essentials; but will two out of this hundred see to it that her clothes are at once smart enough to please her mother, and warm enough to be wholesome? Will they return a decided refusal when her cousin calls to take the picturesque little person to an at-home for the third time that week, or when the Princess wants to carry her off to raffle dolls at a bazaar? Will they take her to a Cornish seaside village for six months and soothe her racked nerves when the bazaars and at-homes have been conceded, and the inevitable end of all this

business arrives? And will they do the same for the eight-year-old brother and the seven-year-old sister? How can you expect them to do such work? They have never studied it, and it has nothing whatever to do with their present difficult and exacting profession.

Apparently, then, we want another profession, the deputy-mother, the guardian with plenary powers, the mother's-help enlarged and glorified into a lady with authority over governess, nurse, and dressmakers, with power to refuse the requests of aunts, and to send the Princess' carriage empty away. I know two such persons among the homes of my clients, and their work is a brilliant success. The two mothers here are, in their children's eyes, clever and beautiful and favourite playmates with whom they occasionally have tea and romp; the father (or uncle, as it is in one case) provides pocket-money, takes the party to the pantomime, chooses schools for the boys, buys guns, ponies, and fishing rods for their holidays, and joins their sport whenever he has time. I cannot describe the exact work of these ladies more simply than by saying that it is the doing of everything which I have de-

scribed in these pages as being now left undone. If the new guardian could add to this a little elementary teaching it would be useful, but my idea—doubtless a very incoherent one—is that for educational purposes her little charge should either have a general day-governess or be taken the round of classes on different subjects, as is frequently done with children in London, and nearly always in Paris. To any one who may suggest that day-governesses are not procurable in the country, I can but reply that my proposal only applies (1) to intellectually busy women, and that these, in the nature of things, mostly live in towns; (2) to socially busy women, who probably live in London, and if they have country houses besides, can obviously afford to engage a resident governess, and fit up rooms for her in the village or house, according to their joint pleasure. As regards the cost of this arrangement, a difficulty certainly presents itself. For the position which I have attempted to describe, you must have a refined lady, with experience, resolute will, patience, tact, and a score of other qualities which, to put the matter plainly and coarsely, command a price in the market. When a daily governess, and a

nurse and maid, and a school-bill for the boys have been added, the cost of two or three children has mounted up to a somewhat large sum. I can only repeat, however, that I am addressing this suggestion to persons who cannot or will not attend to their nurseries themselves, but quite recognise that such places require and merit attention, and are ready to do anything in reason to secure a proper amount of such attention. The matter may not be a pressing one, but it is not a fanciful difficulty. Numerically, these children are not of great importance; such a vast majority of small persons have got parents to look after them that these others seem comparatively but a small handful. But although, as a matter of numbers, they are "nobody much"—(as a four-year-old friend of mine answered diffidently when she had knocked at her mother's study-door during forbidden hours and was asked sharply, "Who's there?")—they are bound to have inherited rather more than an average amount of brains, and would appear therefore to merit a more than ordinary amount of attention.

Chapter III.

PRAYERS.

RELIGIOUS feeling may or may not be a matter of temperament in the case of grown-up folk ; in the nursery there is, I imagine, no emotion or lesson which can be less easily forced into the pupil's mind. Devotionalism, irreverence, and indifference are three separate conditions of feeling which are born in a child like a good or bad temper, and have always seemed to me to be among the strongest and profoundest characteristics, and the most difficult for human guardians to change, of child-nature. I do not mean to suggest that it is impossible to make a certain child conform to all the outward observances of religion ; by example, precept, bribery, and a little judicious smacking, you can make him come down punctually to family prayers, sit still in church, learn the Catechism, study his Bible, and even say his prayers fairly regularly. But for any religious feeling which there may be in his regular perform-

ance of these duties, he might as well be reading the Koran and reciting Greek prayers out of the Iliad. On the other hand, there are a large number of children, boys as well as girls, to whom religion and theology are matters of absorbing interest, and who bombard their guardians at every hour of the day and night with a fire of questions displaying the most active and intelligent thought on these subjects. There are other little souls into whose devotional life one hardly dares to pry, who live all their hours in God's presence, whose prayers are a communion with Him hardly closer than every other word which they have spoken during the day. In my own experience these latter children are very rare exceptions; but I am assured by so many people, whose word I accept unhesitatingly, that they are as numerous in life as in the pages of Charlotte Yonge's story-books, that I put aside my own experience, persisting, however, in my belief that the atmosphere and teaching of home and school have very little to do with this kind of character. An enchanting but irreverent four-year-old friend of mine who, on being taken to church for the first time, studied the business for half an hour, and then demanded, in a clear, firm

voice, "Give me my hat," had been brought up in a most devout atmosphere. Later on he came to grief on that rock which has caused the shipwreck of numerous juvenile theologians; he prayed for a large toy yacht, and did not get it, and declined to pay the slightest attention to the explanations furnished by his mother. Having listened to and weighed them carefully he shook his head, over which seven summers had now passed, and said almost regretfully, "I think I am too young to be religious." This simple fact of demanding something which is genuinely wanted, and not getting it, has, of course, been the undoing of many million small supplicants. Bewilderment and vexation are followed by indifference and doubt, mostly, I am assured, from lack of clear and insistent explanation, but I cannot believe this. No explanation, I think, is really accepted, except one which appeals only to an already complete faith and devotion, viz., that God knows what is best, and does not think it good for the suppliant to grant this particular request. For the guardian to play deity and grant the prayer is not much use in the end. I remember an eight-year-old child whose maid was wont, as a rule, to

bring cake and milk for her final meal before she got into bed. But the meal was capriciously varied now and again by the substitution of bread and butter for cake. This unkind proceeding occurred one night when the small person was unusually antipathetic to bread and butter, and she decided to test the efficacy of prayer. At the end of murmured petitions for parents and friends came a serious supplement: "Oh, God, I pray Thee to give me cake for supper to-night, instead of bread and butter." But when the prayer was finished and the little petitioner looked round for results, the tray stood there without change, and Annette, the maid, was stolidly folding up clothes in a corner. This was bewildering, but she judged it worth while to make another attempt. The prayer was resumed: "Oh, God, the bread and butter is still there. I pray Thee to turn Annette's hard heart." The intervention of a weak-minded human listener caused the cake to be brought on this occasion, but the unwisdom of such intervention was obvious next day.

In my own experience of youthful religion (which, of course, has its limitations, and concerning which, as I say, I am perfectly

ready to accept corrections), religious feeling does not begin till the age of twelve or thirteen, and sometimes later in the case of boys. School confirmation-classes create it as a rule, so far as I see; but by no means invariably. A youthful friend of mine told me once that the confirmation class at his school had other and more practical uses, since boys whose names were included in it could not be flogged. Their names were removed for one serious offence, and the next brought the more familiar punishment. He himself on a certain occasion was convicted of one crime, and was aware that the discovery of another was a matter of a few hours; so, in a moment of inspiration, he visited the headmaster, confessed both offences, and requested to have his name removed from the confirmation list on the ground that he was unworthy to be included in it. Pardon followed, and the young gentleman retired chuckling. The whole business of confirmation was devoid to his mind of the slightest religious meaning, and hours of explanation could not have shown him any harm in so taking advantage of a schoolmaster's whim with regard to an ordinary item of the school curriculum. To

say that a boy is not "nice" who does not become serious while being prepared for confirmation is simply ridiculous. I know a dozen boys, clean-minded, honourable, truthful, and wholly delightful, to whom the rite is on a precise level with an ordinary Scripture class or history lesson. Reverence is not born in these children, and may or may not come to them suddenly later, and then for some reason which no man can tell. The most active belief in the presence of God, the most regular performance of religious duties, can exist without it. Two American friends of mine, aged ten and eleven, say their prayers regularly every night and morning, and learn hymns and texts by the yard, but play the most diabolical tricks on one another while so engaged. The boy's prayers are perfectly serious and real; and God's presence is equally real, for on one occasion when his sister was indulging in the nefarious practice of beating his bare upturned feet with a hair-brush, he apologised to Heaven very seriously and soberly:—"Excuse me, dear Lord, for a moment, while I get up and knock the stuffing out of Nellie"—before he proceeded to rise from his knees and chastise the offender.

Certain grown-up proceedings, even in households filled with the best intentions, do not tend to encourage reverence. Funny stories about children's prayers are told frequently in the presence of children, and it may be taken as beyond doubt that no child who hears such a story will say his prayers again with complete devotion until he has forgotten the story, which he may do within the next few hours, and may not do at all. The majority of children's services which I have visited strike me as remarkably irreverent, a prominent feature of them being a long catechism, with plenty of funny answers and consequent laughter. I may be displaying much ignorance of ecclesiastical arrangements, but I cannot understand why this noisy and humorous conversation between clergyman and children cannot take place in the Sunday school. I remember thinking once, when some children were being asked the meaning of the pressing petition made by the nobleman of Capernaum :—" Sir, come down, ere my child die," and a small boy answered, " He meant 'hurry up,' " and the rest of the congregation laughed approvingly, how absurd it was, first, to teach these youngsters to approach Heaven with reverent

language, and then to invite them to paraphrase the stately English of gospels and prayers with their own horrible slang. I prefer the proceeding of a certain little lady who, whenever she wants to ask for something unusual in her prayers, states her requirements to an elder sister, for whose literary talents she has a warm admiration, and asks that the petition may be written out in "religious" English. It is a fact for which I can vouch that these children's services disgust certain juvenile members of the congregation as much as they entertain others. A youthful but famous member of the theatrical profession, whose theological education is a little backward, and who was introduced to one of these juvenile entertainments for the first time, said decisively afterwards: "I will come with you to the proper morning service if you like next Sunday, but I shan't go *there* again." I am told, however, by persons who know the business better than I do, that my complaint could not be upheld in London, where children's services are taken by the vicar or a most carefully selected substitute, and that the educational and devotional result is all that can be desired.

I wonder how far the practice of inviting visitors upstairs to "see the children put to bed and hear them say their prayers" is a common one. It is a repulsive proceeding which I have encountered several times, and heard years afterwards, from the outraged and insulted little victims themselves, reminiscences of their shame and anger at being made to go through these duties in the presence of a whispering, giggling audience of relatives and friends. Of course this is just "nuts" to a portion of the nursery world. I know a young lady who has been promoted to say her prayers to herself, but scorns such dull business, and when it comes to a petition for blessings on relatives and friends, will settle down to enjoy herself like an actress in the crack scene of a play. Her parents come first; then all such relations as are present, the suppliant keeping half an eye all the time on each person to see how he or she takes it; then a long list of her mother's "young men" and her own, which (her acquaintances being chiefly military) gives her audience the impression that she is going straight through the Army List. Occasionally the name of one of her hearers is ostentatiously left out, but not often, because

the young person likes numbers. Her petition is an elaborately displayed visitors' list, in which quantity and quality are equally important. Another child gained a reputation for utter godlessness in the same surroundings. One of the wearisome and foolish aunts who surrounded her, being desirous either of showing off before the rest of the company, or more probably of getting a "rise" out of the child, demanded: "Now, dear, will you think for a minute; to whom are you going to say your prayers?" The little maid looked gravely round the room till she espied a dark corner, with a low, broad chair in it, far removed from the audience, and she nodded towards it and answered briefly: "To that chair." Grown-up interference of this sort is in truth an extremely delicate and difficult business which may be resented even when coming from a recognised authority. An eight-year-old person of my acquaintance was extremely angry at being commanded to pray for the Boer wounded as well as the English during the late war. Her usual war prayer was a very bellicose affair: "Bless our dear, beautiful soldiers, and our darling sailors, and don't let any of them get hurt, and

make them well soon if they must be, and send all the Boers to hell." To this her guardian commanded that there should be added a petition for the Boer wounded; but the little lady did not mean to tolerate such half-hearted nonsense. Under severe compulsion she added the required words, but a bystander overheard a soft whisper at the end of the prayer: "Never *mind* about the Boers."

The South African War sent a wave of reality over juvenile religion which the young folk of that time are never likely to forget. The children who, with their mothers, crowded the churches during the dreadful December of 1899, the scared little folk whose prayers went out morning and night to far-off lands where fathers and brothers were fighting, were in such deadly earnest about their petitions that they wanted no lessons in devotion, and will probably never want any again. I think it also had a certain effect in stopping the more inane part of the chatter and story-telling on this subject, such stories just then being more likely to produce tears than laughter.

Laxity of every sort is so intolerable to

youth, which so infinitely prefers regularity and discipline and the pleasing monotony of a life which is known, and loved because it is known, that one wonders at the foolishness of guardians who think it an amiable indulgence to their children to let them stay away from church or omit prayers occasionally. A young person who has studied a good many contemporaries at home and at school during her twelve years, wrote me recently an extremely emphatic letter about the training of youth :—

"I think children ought to be trained severely, making Sunday a toyless day. See what nice people the elder generation is composed of now. How severely and primitively they were brought up! Once there was a lady who had five children. Her four eldest were brought up very strictly, but the youngest always had his way. Left school because he did not like it. He grew up very different to his brothers and sisters. They all became charming people, and are alive now. All these people are closely related to me. The youngest grew up slovenly and wild, tried every way he could think of to get a living, but all to no purpose. He at last adopted a stern profession,

in which he to this day slaves. I think children ought to be made to say a prayer every evening, and no more at three years old. They ought to have that prayer thoroughly explained to them. And I think they ought to learn a verse from the Bible every morning before breakfast, and the Collect every Sunday. I hope you will not think this very erratic, but it is my idea of bringing up a child."

This, it must be admitted, is a stern programme for a person of three years old to carry out, and among other points in which I disagree with my correspondent's "idea of bringing up a child" is her appointment of the evening for prayer-time. There are a good many reasons why evening prayer should be shortened to the smallest possible proportions, chief among them being the fact that youth is mostly tired, and consequently cross and quarrelsome at bed-time. Children of the upper class—(to whom I refer with no little trepidation, a critic of another child-book of mine having reproached me wrathfully for writing about them. But for my part I cannot understand the modern ecclesiastic's theory that this class is beneath notice, body and soul. I rather like studying

the little souls of its junior portion, and introducing their small persons into a story in some other capacity than that of the haughty and insolent oppressor, who is at last moved by the good example of the other children to visit the poor)—children of this class go to bed at late and irregular hours during the London season, Christmas holidays, and country-house visits, and unless they are naturally devout, religious exercises will be as unprofitable as unpopular. The two nicest children of my acquaintance have a way when they are tired of resuming the day's quarrels in their evening prayers. "God forgive Frances," prays one of them, "for pushing me into the fountain to-day while I was standing on the edge, and then daring to say that I felled in. . ." It is not etiquette, of course, to interrupt a praying companion, so Frances reserves her answer for her own prayers. "God forgive Marjorie for daring to say that I pushed her into the fountain, when she truthfully knows she felled in her own self, and that Nanna telled her not to stand near the edge. . . ." Then follows a series of aggravations and insults familiar between this pair: "Good night, and God bless you, Lady Marjorie," says Frances

piously. "Don't dare to say 'God bless you' to me, Lady Frances," is the stormy answer; and the nurse, who knows that when these two ladies use one another's titles a first-class storm is threatening, murmurs to each pacifically: "Don't call one another names, dearie."

Prayer-manuals for children have a good many disadvantages. The devout child, as I say, will be always devout; but in the case of the others, the choice lies between irreverence without a manual and unreality with it. After looking through some fifty or sixty of these books, I am full of wonder and admiration at the care and thought which is spent on them, and at the success of the result. Instruction and prayers are alike admirable. Many of them, especially the Roman Catholic books, are charmingly illustrated, and I am filled with astonishment at seeing how every feature of child-life is noticed and provided for with the most perfect sympathy and simplicity and completeness. At least two-thirds of the books which I have looked through, French, German, English and American, Roman Catholic and Anglican, are simply faultless. In others the mistakes are very minor affairs, and many

of these mistakes are doubtless matters of opinion. Brevity being an important part of nursery devotion, it seems rather unnecessary to include prayers for the clergy of the parish, district visitors, Sunday-school teachers, and such-like persons, while the language of some of the prayers occasionally grows rather stilted, and more often rather vague. It is also noticeable that the manuals for boys are distinctly superior to those for girls, many of the latter containing passages of sickly sentimentality, the quotation of which would be entertaining but unprofitable. A good many of these manuals attempt to teach highly exaggerated respect for the clergy and other ecclesiastical authorities, while they are also needlessly intolerant of idleness, allowing no moments of rest at all to their little readers, and some of the writing on the subject of Confession becomes hysterical and a trifle vulgar; but vulgarity, as we all know, means other people's manners, and intolerance means other people's opinions, and there may be many hundreds of little maidens whose souls are moved by the sentences whose sentimentality offends me.

Among the books which have especially delighted me are Mr. Linklater's Lent and

Advent *Talks with Children*, containing short and delightfully-worded advice to youngsters of ten or twelve. Who would not wish to "rub in" the following sentences in a discourse about dishonesty: "Very often people are most careless about using other people's things. That is quite wrong, you ought to be more careful over what is lent to you than over your own things, just because it is not yours. How often the opposite is the case! A book is lent and perhaps not returned for a very long time, if at all, and sometimes one can hardly recognise it; covers loose, leaves lost, and the whole book spoilt, and the one who returns it would be most indignant if he were told he had broken the Eighth Commandment; yet he certainly has, for he has *stolen* the nice appearance of the book from its owner." Among children's manuals which I have discovered in various Roman Catholic shops are some most admirably illustrated books, such as the 'Child's Pictorial Mass Book,' and a manual compiled by Rosa Mulholland, containing a delightful "Hymn for a Child that cannot Sleep at Night," and prayers "For a Child who has spent a good Day," "For a Child who has fallen into a great fault," and "For a Child

whose Mother is dead," which are charming in their simplicity and devoutness; the same book containing instructions for fitting up a "Holy Corner" in the nursery, which leave nothing to be desired. Other admirable Roman Catholic manuals are 'Der Kinderfreund Jesus,' written throughout in the form of a conversation between our Lord and a little child; Mgr. de Segur's 'Manual of Instruction for Little Children,' and an American illustrated Prayer Book for children, whose pictures are novel and unusually well printed. Two other books are 'My Private Prayer Book,' by the Vicar of All Saints', Margaret Street, containing some admirably worded prayers, and a few blank pages at the end on which children may write special prayers and resolutions of their own; and 'A Parent's Manual,' containing suggestions for the progressive teaching and prayers of children from their earliest years onwards.

I have said that girls' manuals are, as a rule, inferior to boys', but I must make an exception of Miss L. H. M. Soulsby's 'Suggestions on Prayer.' They are written, I am told, for girls of fifteen or thereabouts, but I think she has spent a good deal of

time with the kind of children whom I know best, if I may judge by her protest against "rushing into prayer the moment we are on our knees, while the echoes of daily life are still vibrating in our ears. We say our prayers from end to end, and then feel 'I've done my prayers,' as if we had finished turning a handle of a praying machine." Her suggestions in one chapter for "Making a Prayer Book," each child for itself, are delightful; and only too many of my young friends would, I fear, fall in with her notion that three minutes for prayer and two minutes for Bible-reading are a possible minimum. Miss Soulsby, however, like many others of these writers, has an astonishing idea of the amount of matter which can be compressed into a few minutes. "Imperialism is in the air," she says; "how much of it penetrates our prayers? We feel citizens of no mean city—do we pray for our fellow-citizens? We regret War Office mistakes—do we pray any harder about war? Do we perhaps regret that we have no direct interest in public affairs, and yet neglect to pray that earnest public-spirited men may be elected? Surely prayers are as powerful as votes . . . I do not speak of missions and

other religious works which need our prayers, for prayer for these seems an obvious duty. . . . People sometimes seem to think that religion means carefully keeping certain rules, and being very unhappy if you break them ; all their prayers are about being kept from sin and forgiven for failures." I cannot help thinking that a fairly large majority of children, even among Miss Soulsby's older readers, would be considerably dismayed by such teaching, and the whole idea of inviting a child to extend private prayer beyond its own personal needs, and those of a few friends, strikes me as of doubtful value. Surely, till the young folk are far on in their "teens," church services on Sunday may be considered as paying sufficient attention to public affairs.

"Andere Zeiten, andere Vögel," says Heine ; "Andere Vögel, andere Lieder" ; and in the religious world we may hear the singing of new birds. They are more sceptical about old faiths, these modern nestlings, more resolute with questions, more critical of answers. New needs have come among them, a multiplicity of teachers, a confusion of creeds, a pandemonium of assertions, contradictions, doubts and arguments.

The little children, with their whispers from the threshold of life, their breath of faith and love and innocence, will accept most of the old lessons and repeat most of the old prayers willingly enough, and perhaps will be none the worse, morally or intellectually, for the additions of their new teachers. But let us see to it that the sacred minutes of their life are kept sacred.

Chapter IV.

LESSONS.

THE acquirement of knowledge may be described by two expressions. It may be dignified by the name of education, under which title Houses of Parliament, famous chiefs of schools and universities, men of learning, and men who have passed examinations make speeches and write books about it. It can be described as "doing lessons"; and then the minor essayist emerges from his humble obscurity, and struts about for a brief space *coram publico*, adding his little views about the school wall-paper, or the binding of the lesson-books, or the airing of the bedrooms; perhaps even venturing on an occasional sly prod at the pundits to whom he has just been listening so respectfully. For it is a fact about educational authorities that their theories and systems are more easy to criticise intelligently than those of any other scientific leaders who illuminate the present age. By their fruits we know them, promptly, person-

ally, intimately. At the end of a prescribed course of educational treatment—unfortunately only when it is too late to try another—every intelligent man knows whether or not he has got what he required, and can judge the system by a most precise knowledge of such of its fruits as decorate himself or his children.

In all matters of enquiry I am an advocate for going to the victim first; and I cannot understand why a child of seven, with the wisdom and illumination of the dawn fresh on it, should not be listened to respectfully on the subject of its lessons. A Western American friend of mine once concluded an argument with his pompous English guardian by taking up a gun and saying irritably, "I have a right to an opinion on my own education;" and, though I thought the gun a needless bit of emphasis, I quite agreed with his contention. Now, it is a noteworthy but seldom noted fact, that a large majority of children, including a fair proportion of clever ones, hate and despise their lessons. Their contempt for grammar, arithmetic and such-like matter is profound. "That's the sort of thing I only know in term-time," said a small person to me once, indifferently

abandoning her untenable contention that Lake Superior was in Italy, "where it was called Lago Maggiore." "Grown-up people only learn to spell so that children mayn't read their letters," she said scornfully, later, and declined to accede to her governess' prayer and "be an example" to the younger members of her family. She preferred, she stated openly, to be a warning; and wrote me her opinion that in the "hussell and bussell" of her family life her guardians lost all sense of proportion, and attached ludicrous importance to such petty matters as punctuality, meals, dates, tidiness, a surplusage of chocolate, and above all to that uninteresting relation between written and spoken language briefly known as spelling. Her opinion, the clearness and vigour of which I am feebly representing here, was that lessons went into too much detail at first; she had no time to grasp the broad facts of arithmetic, the existence and meaning of multiplication, subtraction and division, before she was harried by the pettiness of the multiplication table; she was not allowed to realise and think out thoroughly the fact of a great and romantic past called history, before her soul was vexed by a dated catalogue of kings and battles.

Also the really important business of life—the building-up and decoration of some mighty castle in the air, the consideration and solution of some newly-presented problem of life—was constantly being interrupted by the interpolation of arbitrary and irrelevant events such as walks and bed time, which she was advised to submit to for the most trivial reasons,—reasons which were found when pressed to their conclusion to be logically contemptible. "Miss Lester told me last night," she confided to me, "that all the little dickie birds had stopped singing and gone to bed, so it was time for me to go to bed too; but she was quite vexed when I went into her room at five o'clock this morning and told her that all the little dickie-birds had wakened up and begun to sing again, so it was time for us to get up too."

I have many moments of sympathy with the little complainant. Lessons, moral and intellectual, are administered to the younger portion of the school-room, even to-day, in spite of much improvement, with a certain triviality of outlook, a dull uniformity, a disregard of individual temperament which is a matter for regret, more especially as the alternative is as easy as it is enlightening.

If a little child—say under the age of ten—dislikes arithmetic, grammar or history very much, why force it to learn them? The whole business of arithmetic, from simple addition to decimal long division, can be picked up by an intelligent child of ten in three months, while at that age history is purely delightful and grammar has already been learned by the simple process of listening to educated conversation. Somewhat later the young brain can master the elements of the most difficult subjects in a few weeks. A youthful and clever tutor told me once that a pupil of his was cramming for the Navy when, in the October previous to the examination, the boy's eyes were found to be slightly wrong, so that he would certainly be refused at the medical examination. The parents then asked—and insisted—that he should be coached for a Winchester scholarship, though at that moment the boy did not know a word of Greek, and the scholarship examination was to take place in the following June. At the end of these eight months the boy, though he had begun in October at the Greek alphabet, and had been going on with his other lessons, did so brilliantly in the examination that he was given a nomination.

Why in the name of wonders should long hours of a baby's life be made hideous by confronting the creature with knowledge which, at that earlier age, is labour and grief to understand, and perfectly useless when understood? Some small folk like sums, and run through them as easily and accurately as a calculating machine or a croupier at Monte Carlo; others love history; once I met a child who liked grammar. Let them learn such things if they will, devoting the barest possible modicum of time to the other disagreeable matters. Let us have more liberty in the home school-room. Judiciously granted and supervised it would impede neither the work nor the discipline of lesson-time.

School-life of course demands a greater measure of uniformity in lessons, and in these days an increasing number of parents find it necessary to send their children to school at an early age. Tubercular diseases demand east coast sea-air, and what residence more simple and accessible than a school at Westgate? Some small person is fretful, lonely, unmanageable, out of harmony with all its surroundings at home, and requires the corporate life of school for its well-being.

Parents cross far-off lands and seas to make and rule an Empire—merciful Heaven, what tears and weary years and broken hearts of children have gone to its building!—and a school is the best place for their family. In a thousand country homes and seaside lodgings in summer-time, you may see some father and mother, with the children, and a maid engaged for four months, who will all be parted in October when the "six months' leave" is over. Parents and children study one another curiously through a few weeks, come to know one another again in September, share jokes and escapades, whisper together of the mysteries of life and death and immortality. Love is at its zenith when the day of parting comes, an October afternoon with rain dripping drearily on Tilbury landing-stage, whence forlorn little figures watch the great P. and O. liner steaming out to sea. Quick! if the small feet can run fast enough you may see the ship's crowded decks once more at the dock gates as she passes through, and even pick out two figures which are your world and life. A helter-skelter rush, more good-byes and promises, and the ship is a blur in a mist of fog and tears. For two more years we must make the best of school-

masters and good-natured friends. Yet the tragedy is a mighty lesson in geography. Various Continental forms of education may or may not have certain advantages over our own; but it is impossible to over-estimate the advantage of the immense breadth of view gained by English children from this intimate association of Imperial business with their daily life. How utterly parochial, if you come to think of it, is the history, for instance, of Germany; how dull her quarrel with some out-lying Elector here, her annexation of some Grand Duchy there! What a collection of dry names a book of travels must represent to many of these brilliantly educated children on the Continent! How dull must be geography lessons to them, or at most as impersonally interesting as a lecture on astronomy! Whereas, let there be a riot in Australia, an earthquake in some West Indian island, or a war in some Himalayan fastness, and atlases are caught up nervously in a thousand English homes, and children's frightened prayers go out to lands whereof no other child in Europe ever has heard, or is in the remotest degree ever likely to hear, the name. You could count by the thousand children in England each

one of whom has travelled more than the whole population of a moderate-sized Continental town. Three children were having tea with me recently, the eldest of whom had accomplished the journey between London and Bombay three times; the youngest, aged five, had done the same journey four times; the other, aged nine, had come from New Zealand for the summer. Three other ladies of my acquaintance, aged four, five and seven, have come over to England from the West Indies every summer since they were born, and they and their English nurses think much less of the voyage than a French *bonne* thinks of taking her charges to Dinard. I remember the open-mouthed amazement of two little Austrian maidens at a Christmas party in London one Friday evening, when a twelve-year-old boy with whom they had been dancing shook hands with them soon after eight o'clock, saying comfortably, "Well, good-bye. I must be off back to Egypt." He had come over from Cairo for the Christmas holidays, and was going back that night—under charge of a friend who was *en route* to Calcutta *viâ* Brindisi, and who was to meet him at Victoria; but you would not have been thanked for reminding

him of this fact. My young gentleman's haughty air and brown curls and vigorous dancing had made an impression on one of the little Austrian hearts, for whose owner Egypt had thenceforth some real meaning and existence. Lessons, we know, are not always written in books. I think it was the same youth who gave a delightful answer to a woman who was expressing her admiration for his eldest brother, a well-known soldier and traveller whom the speaker had "only seen once but liked very much." "I've only seen him twice," said the child gravely, "and I like him too."

The management of an English school is a responsible and complicated business when half a dozen or so of these babies, who can hope for some considerable time to go on writing their age with one figure, whose sorrows can scarce put themselves into words, and about whose pains and maladies, though they come and go like summer clouds, you must write lengthily and frighten horribly some brooding heart ten thousand miles away, honour it with their patronage. What amusements can be provided for these little things who ought to be making sand-castles or bowling hoops, but must play cricket and

hockey and football unless they would be laughed at by the others? What lessons are they to learn, what faith in Heaven to be taught, who ought to ask all their questions and tell all their doubts and fears with their mother's arm round them? How can you know whether the elder boys or girls, those just but most merciless judges of a "cad," "bounder," "sneak," or other unpleasing person, will accept this wretched baby into their delightful but exclusive society? And what are you to do if the *Vehmgericht* of the school sits in judgment and pronounces against the new-comer? You may command or beg for a reversal of the judgment; the judges will listen respectfully, but they will not obey. You may tell the child to hope for better days, but he lives for to-day; youth is the season of hope only in that our elders are hopeful for us.

If any further proof were needed of the splendid management of English schools, it might be found in the fact that the immense majority of English parents whose work causes them to be confronted with this problem, choose school-life for their children, and that the barest possible minority of these are dissatisfied with their choice. Such

parents, it must be remembered, are rarely without plenty of alternatives. Uncles, aunts, good-natured friends, with or without payment, are willing enough to undertake the charge of the children. School-life is chosen deliberately, with plenty of experience and thought, and with no small financial self-sacrifice, for it certainly is not the cheapest solution of the difficulty; English schools being without any rival or question the most expensive in Europe.

A hardly less terrifying class of pupil, offered chiefly to the schoolmasters and mistresses of seaside schools, is the small convalescent with a weak spine or doubtful lungs or the malady known among little folk as "the glands." This doctor has advised Cornwall for one, that doctor commands Westgate for another; and a school is the simplest solution of the problem. In this case one difficulty disappears; for if the illness be genuine, no more sympathetic and charming companions could be found in the kingdom than the invalid's fellow-pupils; but the responsibility to the master or mistress is beyond what any reasonable sum of money can pay for. There is no weapon in the nursery armoury more

easy to learn to use, and more effective when skilfully used, than illness. To insist upon lessons where the professed headache or pain or fatigue is real may mean very serious disaster; to give way when the child is "shamming" is a moral catastrophe; there is a precipice on either side of you, and your inclination (as no one knows better than the imp with whom you have to deal) is to "play for safety" on the physical side. A man has need to be a first-class character-reader, surgeon and nurse to judge correctly in some cases, and it is always a shade of odds on an intelligent child who has ever been really ill, humbugging its guardian five times out of six attempts. A great nerve-specialist told me once that he had been called in to look at a girl of fourteen who had suddenly displayed every ordinary symptom of hip-disease; the family doctor was convinced she had acute hip-disease and required an immediate operation; a minor consulting surgeon thought she had "nerves" and wanted an immediate whipping. The latter turned out to be right.

Since a normal healthy child of eight is the nearest approach ever seen to perpetual motion, and it is equally injurious and impossible to keep him or her at work for

more than a few short periods of the day, such very young school-children also create difficulties. In one of the best boys' preparatory schools of my acquaintance the little ones (*i.e.* those under nine) are separated entirely from boys aged between nine and fourteen; having a matron of their own, a governess instead of masters, and separate hours, playground, and class-rooms. The plan would not, I imagine, work very well in a girls' school, where the small children are less reticent about their private affairs, and require a good deal of the sympathy which they only obtain from their elders. Hurt toes and tempers produce tears here;—facile tears, received with scorn by one's contemporaries but apt to leave sore hearts unless they are dried;—and many other events require telling to sympathetic elder ears. I remember a little maid reading a home letter in her school garden, in company with three other juveniles and two elders; suddenly she looked up, her small face scarlet with excitement: "Oh," she said, "Cynthia's had all her hair cut off!" The news was received coldly by the lady's three contemporaries, who presumably had not the honour of Cynthia's acquaintance; the pink

face grew a little blank, and its colour began to die away, when an elder girl fortunately saved the situation by a few interested questions and comments. The lesson-hours of these little people are probably a merciful relief from the trouble of looking after them out of lesson time; and the former hours cannot in the nature of things be a third of the day. In truth, to the majority of such small folk four hours lessons per day is, as the Scotch minister said of Eternal Punishment, "exceeding abundant, above all that they desire or deserve;" and a grievous sense of their mistake has probably come over a good many French and German governesses whose fond delusion about their duties has once been that of a fifteen-year-old school-girl of my acquaintance, who "could not think what the German matron does here. She has really nothing to do except hear my German irregular verbs and dry the little ones after their bath." In her retirement the matron more probably shared the lament of the old village school-dame over her former pupils: "Come the long winter afternoons, and I misses 'em and I wants 'em. But I misses 'em more than I wants 'em."

In these days of educational fervour, the lesson-hours of schools are increasing every year. Many sane persons are glad to see this beginning of the end of the athletic craze, which has been the curse of all upper-class education since the disastrous day for England when cricket and football were invented, and the Duke of Wellington made—or did not make—his unfortunate remark about the Battle of Waterloo having been won on the playing fields of Eton. Athletics have an ill-defined, doubtful, though conceivable value in a system of education ; but insanity is always a misfortune ; and no reasonable man would deny that the crazy, idiotic cultivation of athletics which distinguished the upper class boys' schools of England during the second half of the nineteenth century, is in large measure responsible for the commercial losses, military disasters and artistic decadence which—doubtless in very exaggerated fashion—we lament to-day. The increase of athleticism in girls' schools would be noted with universal approval were it not for the suspicion of it engendered—and most rightly engendered—by noting its results elsewhere. It will be a national calamity of incalculable magnitude if ten

years hence the admirable preparatory girls' schools sprinkled over Westgate and Brighton, the girls' high schools and colleges in Winchester, Cheltenham, Bedford and Ealing, and such women's colleges as Newnham, Girton, and Somerville, have sunk to the level of imbecile uselessness attained by Oxford, Cambridge, and the majority of upper-class boys' schools ten years ago. We do not want any more famous institutions debased, nor old and noble endowments misappropriated, for the training of professional athletes.

Yet these lesson hours sometimes strike me as severe. In a well-known school at Brighton the girls (of ages between eleven and seventeen) get up at 6, work (before breakfast) from 7 to 8, and again from 8.30 to 10, from 11 to 1.15, from 2.30 to 5, and from 8.15 to 9; that is eight hours a day; and punishment mostly takes the form of extra work. Even on Saturday afternoon there is an hour and a half of preparation. The teaching is first-class, the food and exercise are perfect; and my chief friend among the children thrives as vigorously as she complains; but this is stern work. It was from a school close by, conducted in

similar fashion, that another twelve-year-old lady wrote to her admiring parents that she "had joined the school debating society, and opened a debate last night on the emancipation of women."

I know three absolutely and ideally perfect boys' schools and two girls' schools, all at Westgate; which small village is indeed a perfect place for a school. I have also the honour to be more or less acquainted with five or six dozen schools in other parts of England, and a dozen or so in other parts of Europe, a large majority of which are doing most admirable work; the English schools, open to criticism, perhaps, in parts, chiefly when they try to rival German prices without German unscrupulousness in the matter of bad food and underpaid teaching; yet in the main admirable. But as most of us have one supreme being among our friends who can do no wrong, and in whose presence there is always joy, so it is to me with a certain moderate-sized, red-brick, creeper-covered house on the sea-front at Westgate, whose inmates are dearer than all other friends. The memory of them is of something which used to light up sea-walls and lawns and sands as though June flowers

were being blown backwards and forwards there by summer winds. The gloomiest November afternoon brightened as, strolling down the wet wind-swept road, one passed these broad Elizabethan windows, against which, if fortune were very kind, some pink face framed in curls was pressed vaguely expectant, infinitely hopeful and faithful, seeing and hearing things in heaven above and the earth beneath which are now hid from older eyes for evermore. The owner of the house, most merciful in allowing rays of its sunlight to fall on world-weary wayfarers, herself loving it enough to sympathise with those who are outside, admits sometimes a well-tried friend, who stands for a few moments, forgetting self with its endless regret, lost in a wave of love for these white souls who know no past nor its remorse, who laugh through to-day, and under God's grace are kings of the future. I know not why, but to this house no disagreeable children ever seem to come; romps and idlers come, greedy little folk and vain, ladies with tempers, crochets and wills of their own; but the really "horrid" child never; or maybe that under the kindly and well-practised hands of those in authority here

everything disagreeable retires for a time, finding the company uncongenial. Lessons are done sternly and steadily enough ; when a young person gets up at 10 p.m., lights some candles and tries on her best frock, she is punished ; when a little maid is found weeping one night because "Lily c-came and knocked at the d-door and said she was a g-ghost, and I was f-f-frightened," there is swift retribution for Lily. But life here is love and romping and laughter, with only such clouds as must blow across the sky of any spring day ; and in the winter of discontent I am grateful when I may spend an hour inside these picture-windows, where the spring morning light brightens slowly over the young lives, where no more sorrowful or unkind feeling could intrude itself than envy of the folk who own these dainty jewels of white innocence, these pearls without price.

To educate a child up to a point where it perceives the defects of its country's educational methods, and condemns them root and branch, teachers, text-books, hours, aims and results, is a not uncommon result of upper and middle-class teaching ; and the young person thereupon demands to be "finished" in another country—for preference one of

which its parents disapprove. Thus I have heard the small German maiden complain that the music schools of her country are over-ridden by Wagner, so that no musical teaching worth the name is, in her fourteen-year-old opinion, to be had outside the Paris Conservatoire; while two young French friends have lately discovered that no language will be any use for the future except that of England, in which country—or none—they accordingly propose to finish their education. Our own young folk are not backward in this cosmopolitan humility—naturally enough, since the immediate outcome of it is travel, adventure, novelty, and liberty.

I suppose that nobody, except a few cranks of a peculiarly foolish description, really imagines that the elementary education (in this sense) of France and Belgium is superior to our own, or that anything except a superior French accent is to be gained by residence there; or that even in Germany there is anything to be gained by young folk which is worth the slightest risk to body or soul. In fact, it is a less common practice than formerly to send young children as boarders to foreign schools, or for a family to go and

live in Dresden, Brussels, Tours, or Lausanne for educational purposes ; though, on the other hand, there is a considerable increase in the number of women who love and lead a roving life on the Continent, and deposit their children in some French or German school with the silly and futile intention of keeping a certain amount of watch on them. I have personally discovered in such places many unhappy little mortals who ought to be playing with English friends at Westgate or walking two-and-two along the King's Road at Brighton. Numerous schools in Paris, Brussels, Wiesbaden, Heidelberg, and so on, receive English children for a year or two, of course with profuse promises of exceptional kindness and attention. But in fact such children are a nuisance to the mistresses, who must withdraw time and attention from the other children whom they are pushing forward for prizes and examinations, in order to teach the newcomers their language. It takes on an average about five months before an English child of eleven or twelve knows enough German to be placed in an ordinary class with German children ; and then for at least another term they are a drag on the rest of

the class. How popular this makes them with their class companions and teachers may easily be guessed. The whole school is full of arrangements which are unfamiliar and objectionable to the English child. Complaints about food are not, of course, worth much attention; a school-child in any country in Europe who admitted that its food was satisfactory would be a rare and probably unpleasing phenomenon; but foreign meals, good or bad, are wholly unsuited to nine English children out of ten. In many German establishments cooking-classes are part of the morning's work, and the children's dinner is partly cooked by themselves. There is no real harm in this, I suppose. A little maid did, indeed, once lament to me her fate in being obliged to help, and when I answered consolingly, "It is only play," she and her companion said ruefully, "Yes, but we have to eat the play." But the menu was sound, and the food looked good.

Religious differences, however slight, are a source of endless bewilderment, more especially, of course, in France or Belgium. The promises of the mistress to respect the religion of her small English charges are mostly worthless; if her own intentions are

good she cannot control her other pupils or under-mistresses. When you have once or twice received the sobbing confidences of some little person who has been told that she will go to hell if she dies that night, because she is not a Roman Catholic, you appreciate the value of such pledges. Child etiquette differs everywhere, and it is many weary months before the small English lady —etiquette bound as the most world-worn *mondaine*—is at home in foreign "society." The instruction administered to these youngsters, even in schools well accustomed to English children, like those of the Sacré Cœur or Englisher Fraulein, moves too rapidly; what the instructress says is delightful, but there is a good deal of it. Scoldings are mostly incomprehensible; the mistress who dispenses them has too great a command of language—or rather, language has too great a command of her—for their point to be understood; which is lucky, since in five cases out of six they are unjust.

The pension-school-life of Hanover, Dresden and Leipzig is a different matter, and seems a harmless enough amusement for an ordinary girl of seventeen or eighteen with some money and sufficient good sense

to avoid unpleasing acquaintances. Lessons here are no doubt very good for their price, which rarely exceeds ten marks for the best, and the price of opera-seats and other details of a musical education are proportionately low. Everything could probably be got equally well in London, but the life is new and amusing and carefully supervised by competent people. The pupil picks up a little German, makes acquaintance with some American children living in similar fashion, gives tea-parties to five-year-old German babies who are working for one of the higher examinations, and chatters to the crowd of German children who flock along the streets with their happy, friendly faces and pretty English greetings. It is a decent, amusing, and not unprofitable life.

In Belgium and France matters are very different, and no words, however strong, no repetition, however frequent, can sufficiently emphasise the risk of sending girls to either country without the most searching inquiries. In many of the school-pensions of Brussels rooms are let to chance tenants when there are not enough girls to fill the house. The charges for lessons here are small compared to Paris and London, but are not, in fact,

especially low considering the very inferior quality of the education. There are one or two good boarding-schools in Brussels, but they are more expensive than Dresden boarding-schools, and the education is naturally no better than could be found in a hundred English establishments for the same price. It is, however, more especially the reckless manner in which English and American parents send their children to schools and families in Paris which amazes me. Women who consult the friendly station-master or hotel-keeper about a school sometimes meet with tiresome results in England; when they ask—and adopt—the advice of the concierge or tea-room-proprietress in France, they ought to be confined in an asylum for criminal lunatics till their daughters are of age. With the exception of two or three well-known convent schools (admission to which is by no means to be had for the asking) no school or pension in Paris should be considered for a moment unless the parents themselves have an intimate personal acquaintance with its head. There is no subject on which people are so totally unscrupulous as in recommending French schools. I have more than once heard

responsible and well-informed persons in Paris, whose advice might naturally be asked and taken by any parent, recommend some grossly incompetent acquaintance of their own with an effrontery which would be amusing in a less serious matter. Music and art lessons may be very good in Paris, but they are certainly not cheap; fifty francs per lesson being quite a common price to pay for the former; while in the good pensions children are charged 450 and 500 francs a month for food, lodging, and general superintendence of their lessons. Amusement here is, of course, out of the question, except for an occasional visit to the Nouveau Cirque or an expedition to Versailles; and the small Londoner, accustomed to a considerable amount of freedom and a very large amount of amusement, finds life in Paris extremely dull. French youth accepts this without question, but the continual excuses and lame explanations which have to be offered to English youngsters when they demand to go everywhere and see everything, have struck me sometimes as not the least unedifying portion of a most dangerous plan of education.

Chapter V.

DISAGREEABLE CHILDREN.

I HAVE referred to the curious popular belief about a person who is seen frequently in the company of children, that he must like every creature under the age of sixteen. Most of us, however, who have much to do with the nursery, whether from choice or necessity, find that our acquaintances there divide themselves into groups, pleasing and unpleasing, very much as is the case with grown-up folk; we love and hate a few, and like and dislike a good many. I, for instance, who know a very large number of children, am severely bored by at least half of them, and detest several of them as warmly as I dislike anyone in the world. A disagreeable child is in truth an extremely offensive person. It is restrained by no sense of decency or respectability; it is unhampered by any of the ordinary conventions of society; while its victim feels—very erroneously—that in his vexation he ought to make tolerant allowance

for the objectionable person's age, or—with more reason—that he will be expected by the little horror's parents to make such an allowance. For my own part, I make none. I know this young world so well—it is a poor merit, but mine own—that I recognise without any difficulty the rudeness, for instance, and tiresome rowdiness, which come sometimes to the nicest children as a result of over-excitement and over-fatigue, and the same evils in a child who is not indisposed but ill-disposed. No sensible human being would be seriously offended by the former; while on the other hand a man must be indeed a foolishly sentimental lover of children—and a most unwholesome companion for them—who accepts the impertinence of some ill-mannered, radically vulgar boy or girl, because the offender is "only a child." I saw once an elderly lady fall in love with a little person of seven, pink cheeked, blue-eyed, beautiful to behold, and go through the whole familiar armoury of handkerchief tricks, baby stories and feats of modest legerdemain in making friends with it. This armoury becoming exhausted after a time, the child began to look bored, and presently terminated the interview with an

angry, "Oh, go away, you silly old thing." Her companion retired, and waited patiently till the child came near again in search of more amusement, when she obediently administered it. Subsequently the young lady used the same words to me, thinking—perhaps not unnaturally—that they were an accepted method of saying that she had had enough of a certain person's attentions. She is now, I believe, undeceived on this point.

There is all the difference in life, too, between the character of a child, who in homely phrase "gives trouble" to servants or friends from mere impertinent idleness, and that of a child who is accustomed to being waited on, and asks from its attendants in perfectly polite language some ordinary service which they are there to render. "That boy," said an irascible tutor about one of the former kind, "wouldn't stir a finger to lift a herring off a gridiron; but he'd ask me to shift the Rock of Gibraltar." On the other hand, people are continually criticising children unkindly for calling their maids to dress them, or to perform some other task which is part of the maid's duty, and which has been done for the child since the day she was born. I have heard similar

foolish criticisms passed on a six-year-old friend of mine, who had realised ever since she was two that all her acquaintances desired nothing more of life than the honour of waiting on her, and that her only business in the matter of demanding suit and service from them was to distribute her favours equally. "Outrageous little nuisance she must be," murmured two visitors in the Hotel Meurice one evening, as they passed a room where the young lady was sitting on the floor in her nightgown, proclaiming: "I really cannot go to bed without my dear cat and my dear monkey;" and half the staff of the hotel, her devoted friends and admirers, were searching for a stuffed cat and monkey; not, perhaps, without an *arrière pensée* that if they were found in some elderly visitor's bed—as they subsequently were—there would be wrathful complainings next day on the part of that visitor. In theory this child should have grown up idle, capricious and intolerably selfish; in fact, she is a charmingly courteous and considerate little lady, witty, gracious and beautiful: a living illustration of my favourite theory that "spoiling" does not spoil when it is mere love and care and tenderness

lavished on some person who is capable of repaying the love. The child who is really spoilt by love was probably never worth troubling about; he was born almost incurably selfish, and his chances of cure (except by one means to which I refer later) were about equal with stern guardians or indulgent. We talk so much nowadays about the training of children, that we have lost sight of the fact that they possess a certain amount of individual character.

Everybody has their own—sometimes diametrically opposite—ideal of the superficially unpleasant child. Some folk like a "nice, quiet" boy, others call him a muff. Lewis Carroll, whose liking for children was of a very circumscribed and highly sentimental character, disliked all boys, and asked that they might not be brought to his rooms. A polite child is either "a prettily-behaved little thing," or a pest, according to one's mood. I remember an English child in a Dinard hotel who was immensely popular with every visitor for two or three days. If a lady lost a handkerchief the child would enquire anxiously: "Quand avez-vous dernièrement frotté votre nez?" and ransack the hotel for it. She got up pic-nics,

inviting numerous acquaintances, with the anxious preliminary enquiry: "Etes-vous vide (disengaged) demain?" and was never so happy as when she was posing as an ingénue in the presence of a dozen guests, and making elaborately innocent remarks for their entertainment. Her life, like that of many public entertainers, was a busy and exacting one. After church on Sunday she must be "drawn" about the sermon and theology in general; a baby appeared suddenly in the hotel, and her observations on the origin of species were encouraged with delighted laughter; privileged visitors went upstairs to say good-night to her in bed and brought down her latest bon-mot—such a well-tried bon-mot!—one wonders what the child thought privately of the people who laughed at it. Three days hence this batch of visitors will have found out the small actress, and will denounce her to the next batch as a "poseuse"; some of them, let us hope, with a penitent heart-ache under their most just reprobation. The little poseuse has but been acting as she has been taught to act by parents, elder sisters, and a host of sometime admiring neighbours; she gets dreadfully tired of it now and then; most

thankfully now and again she will creep into the arms of some friend who does not want her to do any tricks, and will let her rest there. I remember a little lady who came into her home garden one morning at breakfast-time and told a visitor that she had been sent to tell him "dinner was ready." "At least, not exactly dinner. The other meal. But everyone always laughs at me when I pronounce it. I expect that's why mother's sent me to you." The child, you see, quite understood the orders of the stage-manager, but was not in a mood to face the footlights.

There are, however, a certain number of young people who, of their own free will and natural instinct, play to a gallery in this fashion from morning to night; and I confess to loathing such children with a whole-hearted loathing. These are the creatures whose games, and meals, and life generally are an unredeemed nuisance in London and country houses, in sea-side hotels and lodgings. No genuine game can be played before a grown-up gallery; your honest child wants to go into a remote back-garden, or on to wide sands with his trumpet, drum, reins, or bucket and spade; it is only the thoroughly

objectionable child who drags his companions close to the tennis-lawn, or hotel verandah, and blows his trumpet with one eye on the soldiers whom it summons, and the other on the grown-up folk who are watching and, he hopes and believes, admiring him. From this one may deduce the satisfactory conclusion that noises, when objectionable, are nearly always made by objectionable children, and that to smack the head of a person who thus infuriates one is simply a duty which one owes to the world. If house and grounds are of a certain size no toleration whatever need be extended to obtrusively noisy children. Always excepting the inmates of a small house, I know no exception to the rule that such children are all, boys and girls, radically and intensely offensive persons. In a small house some noise is inevitable, but beyond a certain point the amount of it depends entirely on the good or bad manners, the selfishness or unselfishness, of the children.

The majority of people are unconsciously and inevitably unjust in dealing with a world of which they have such slight and brief experience as of this nursery one. Neither duty nor inclination call them to decide

whether a boy in a temper is a radically vicious child or, in homely American parlance, has stepped out of bed that morning on to the "business end" of a tin-tack. Another boy catapulting birds may be a sportsman or inherently cruel, a profoundly solemn child who declines to join games may be miserably shy or a self-conscious little prig. A kindly but uncomprehending friend of youth was dreadfully upset once when she found two small nephews quarrelling fiercely, and on asking nervously: "Oh, my dears, do you want to be like Cain and Abel?" was met by the stern question: "Which of us would be Cain?" She was induced to see that this lapse into sin was momentary, and my instruction to her was repeated when one of her charges made the goat eat the bath-sponge and then took it to a stream to drink; after which she hopelessly misapplied her lesson to a horribly cruel little imp who stood with her for a moment in the Tuileries Gardens, watching a man feeding the birds. Under a momentary pleasing delusion that the morsels of bread were deadly and subtly destructive missiles, carrying death and mutilation among the birds, he watched the operations with a delighted smile, and readily

accepted some crumbs which he was given to throw. But as the birds ate the crumbs one after another with obvious satisfaction, the young gentleman grew first suspicious and then furious. Finally he picked up a rock as big as himself, and flung it (and himself on the top of it) into the middle of the birds, frightening them away and damaging his own anatomy considerably. His mind had been an open book throughout the business ; but my good friend could only remember her recent lessons, and picked up the little imp, who had not hurt himself nearly as much as he deserved, and comforted him with soothing words and much chocolate. It is so difficult for the most conscientious person to avoid the pit-falls and impassable mountains and culs-de-sac of this child-world ! Two or three joking allusions to getting into debt, without an accompanying sermon, may have a most disastrous effect on some young lad ; yet what casual jester would think of explaining to this listening child on each occasion that it is quite a common thing, and frequently done, even in the highest circles of society, to pay a man for what you buy from him ? And who, without making themselves

ridiculous, could mete out a precise measure of blame to a sixteen-year-old lady who aggressively and prematurely does up her hair, lets down her frocks, and gives out to all her former friends that she will make it hot for any of them who do not abandon her Christian name and call her Miss Smith? Or devise reproofs for these small ex-friends who mock Miss Smith derisively, and conclude each daily passage of arms with their last and worst insult: "You *child?*" Yet this is no joke; there will be serious trouble for the guardian when Miss Smith—*nunc in ovilia, mox in reluctantes dracones*—demands parties at the Dieppe Casino instead of digging sand-castles, and young French officers to talk to instead of the admiring school-boys who yesterday gave her chocolate on the *plage*.

I am minded to protest at greater length and with some emphasis against the continual assertion or assumption that parents and grown-up friends and guardians are chiefly responsible for the defects of disagreeable children. A child, after all, is not invariably a colourless, helpless creature, on whose mind I can write any tale of good or evil which I choose. It is fre-

quently, in spite of precept and example to the contrary, a highly accomplished little liar, endlessly bad-tempered and sulky, priggish or selfish past power of belief. I remember a little maid who came to England from a small home in Australia, from parents who were modest, kindly souls, living completely alone, devoting themselves entirely to their children and their farm. The child stayed for some weeks with some amiable, unambitious country relatives, among whom it behaved quite prettily, and then went on to a very large country house where all the surroundings and fashion of life were completely new to her. My small Australian walked through this house-full of wealth and luxury (which had no ostentation about it, being alike to children and elders the mere natural inheritance of generations) with her little nose in the air and cold scorn on her lips. She examined the children's clothes and turned over the contents of their jewel-boxes with contemptuous smiles; she had pink silk nightgowns in Australia, she said condescendingly, with priceless embroidery on them; her frocks all came from Paris; her petticoats and certain other garments had lace on them which cost pounds and

pounds ; she had—also in Australia—a diamond necklace, and pearl shoe-buckles, and more bracelets than she could count. She had left all these things in Australia because—because—— The luncheon-gong rang at this point, in time to avoid the explanation of why she had brought none of these wonders to England. Every day added to her catalogue of them, till the other children grew sceptical, and said so ; and war raged.

A prig is more often made than born ; but, after all, the much blamed guardian must have had some natural material on which to work. Two children once ran across from their convent school-room to the chapel in the rain, forgetting their umbrellas, with the result that their white linen bonnets collapsed, and they were told sternly by a Sister in the ante-chapel to go back, since "they were not fit to appear in Our Lady's presence." One, writing of the incident, recorded the rebuke with solemn acceptance of it, referring sorrowfully to her deprivation of the service ; the other mentioned that "I didn't mean to laugh, but my face slipped and Sister was quite vexed. I didn't want to vex her, I love her, she has a face like a

dear, dear, kind monkey. She told me afterwards to take example by H—— who was quite miserable at not having been allowed to come to chapel, and she said she wished I would spend as long over my confession as H——. I didn't like to tell her that as H—— cribs all her lessons from little L—— she probably has more to confess than I have." Here you have a spirited attempt to make prigs of two children, one attempt being successful and the other not. Let us apportion the blame fairly. Literary, artistic and religious prigs have all the root of the vice in them before anyone can cultivate the flower; while on the other hand, perhaps, the sternest repression of all natural sentiment and expression cannot kill the human sympathy which lives in nice children. Yet doubtless a good deal of mischief is done, especially by excessive consideration for chance listeners. I suppose that one reason for the toleration and encouragement of priggish children is that they never shock the casual friend or bystander, and this "shocking" process is a great terror to many feeble-minded guardians of youth. A small child who called the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris "a stuffy old place,"

and a six-year-old lady who studied the Venus de Medici for a moment and then pronounced that "she wouldn't have a silly old statue like that in her bedroom"—"bedroom" being presumably suggested by the lack of clothing—were both sternly rebuked, and may end in becoming artistic prigs of the most hopeless description.

I imagine there is scarcely anyone who, if asked for his or her ideal of a radically offensive, as opposed to a superficially unpleasant child, would not agree that selfishness was the most intolerable vice of all in young folk. Here, indeed, is a quality born in children, growing with their growth, fed by punishment, thriving on lectures and rebuke, ineradicable by the example or precept of any human guardian. Who has not sat down helpless and furious before the demands and complaints of some child who will only play one game and one part in it, who wants one present from the Christmas-tree or one especial place to see some spectacle, and deliberately sets to work to make life intolerable to everyone else till he or she has got that present or place? Who has not encountered the little fiend in a house full of illness or trouble, and longed to

shake the life out of it? At the age of eight or thereabouts many of these imps have a peculiar, nerve-harassing, whining cry which they can keep up for a perfectly indefinite period, and do keep up till they get what they want. The ordinary man settles himself in a chair at first, with clenched teeth, and the iron resolution which is born of justice in his soul, resolved that this child shall scream itself hoarse and sick before he will give way; but the contest is a ludicrous one; he might as well resolve to sit quiet with a cobra's teeth in his neck. The odds are 1000 to 1 on the child, and in their souls both combatants know it. Most fortunately there is a remedy to hand which will relieve all the grown-ups and may partially cure the child. This sort of person wants school-life, a life among contemporaries who do not keep nerves, but do keep varied and highly-effective remedies for his complaint. The treatment is a stern and searching one; not always successful, since the thoroughly selfish child will frequently succeed in dominating the school as he has dominated his world at home. Also the cure leaves a good many scars behind; and the scars are unluckily not only physical

ones. But such treatment is this child's last hope of salvation, and only the most weak-minded sentimentalist would disapprove of it.

The majority of people, as I say, are unjust in dealing with the world of which I am writing, and one of the most common forms taken by this injustice is to dislike a child with whom one has been badly bored. Dullness, when one comes to reflect seriously on the matter, is not a crime at any age or in any part of the social world, and it really is not fair to condemn a child, body and soul, as past hope of redemption, for an affliction which falls upon all mankind, sometimes permanently, and often for long periods. It is not the duty of anybody under the age of eighteen to entertain the neighbours with whom they are left alone for a short time. It is my duty to do this; it is the duty of my grown-up neighbour to do it. If we are put together at a dinner-party, or find ourselves sitting together in a drawing-room, concert-hall, or other place where people make a regular practice of conversation, convention decrees that we are not to sit and stare at one another, but must say something at regular intervals. No such custom binds

younger folk; indeed, if there be any law in their case at all, it is that they are to be "seen and not heard." Presumably, therefore, the child who sits opposite to you in stolid, stony silence, with a vacuous stare and an occasional heavy sigh, is not only within its strict rights in so behaving, but is actually doing its duty.

There are, however, two ways of doing one's duty, and I should still venture to class a good many of these silent young people in the category of disagreeable children. The majority of them are not really so painfully shy that they cannot speak, but are merely very much annoyed at being dressed up in party clothes and party manners, and sent among their elders for an hour or two. One would be inclined to grant them license for a certain amount of resentment at this fate. One understands their declining to make advances to anybody except under compulsion, and even sulking during the first few minutes of overtures from the most well-meaning guest; but at that point excuses must stop, as a rule. The young person who receives kindly conversation, except from intimate friends among his or her own contemporaries, in sulky silence,

is a person addicted to sulks under a good many other circumstances, and is therefore disagreeable.

There are, however, as I have suggested, many legitimate excuses for youthful resentment at this kind of ordeal; and final judgment on the matter of sulks is extremely difficult. Numberless people are annoyed by having a child in the room at all, and intensely indignant if compelled to talk to it; others are frantically and genuinely terrified by such a necessity; others, with the best intentions in the world, have an impression that nursery conversation is a special art of its own, and spend their time wondering where to begin. All these sensations of vexation, fear, and bewilderment are perfectly evident to their young companion, who is, naturally enough, somewhat annoyed by them, and by the *de haut en bas* tone which is their result when conversation does begin. "Why does he talk as if he was mocking at me the whole time?" asked a child once, after a conversation with a very patronising elder; and this same young person was very angry when she detected a certain familiar trick played on her by a young man, whose proceedings are best described in his own

words: "Did you see me manœuvring to get near Lady F——?" he asked me. "I was resolved to find out the truth about Jack and Ella, and she was talking to Jack, and obviously did not mean to let me have a word with her. But I got hold of little Muriel, and worked her down the room till I got her between Lady F—— and the door. You see, I knew Jack had to go at five. Then, directly he said good-bye, I stepped into his place. But it was heavy driving talking to that child for twenty minutes. I tried her on the alphabetical system: 'Have you ever been to the Alps?' 'Do you keep Bees?' 'Do you like Cows?' But I think she spotted it, and spotted what I was after too, for just as I got to the 'G' she looked up at me and said, 'I think your friend's Going.' Good Lord, what a lot these children do know nowadays!"

Muriel undoubtedly had "spotted" the whole business, and if it did not give her a very high opinion of her elders' behaviour, that is hardly a matter for surprise. Again, the massive silence in which a good many children accept reproofs is sometimes a combination of sulking and of a desire to note carefully how far they can go in future

without a first-class tempest. The degree of iniquity of a sulky child requires some skill to detect ; but when you have found a young person who owns the vice unalloyed and unashamed, you have found a very disagreeable child.

Chapter VI.

Punishment.

To a world so easily thrilled and shocked as the present one, the word "punishment" is not lightly to be spoken. A man who is knocked down at night by a gang of roughs, who rob him of his possessions and add a little kicking *de gaiété de cœur*, must not invite society to avenge him, but must get up and devise sweet and kindly measures for providing his uninstructed but well-intentioned assailants with more educated amusement. The man or woman who has to bring up half-a-dozen children may take his or her choice among a score of new methods of training. But punishment is taboo. Long moral lectures, full of well-balanced argument, interspersed with an occasional intimation that the lecturer has been deeply grieved and hurt, are, if I understand the advice tendered to the managers of modern nurseries, to take the place of old-fashioned punishments. Before

even these mild correctives are administered, a doctor must be called in to see if the fault is due to some defect of health; and, generally speaking, the business of correcting thumb-sucking, nail-biting, small tempers, or the vagaries of some seven-year-old lady who proposes to change the order of her lessons because "her arithmetic brain goes dead on Wednesday," will occupy the entire time and attention of one medical specialist, one ethical lecturer, two parents, and a nurse, who must all be possessed of a considerable share of patience. And so must the child.

I have wondered sometimes how far this teaching is a result and how far a cause of the nervous, fractious, unquiet state of mind which prevails to-day, and to which its doctrines are so admirably adapted. These moral lectures, inculcated by so many American and English writers, are admirable when they are delivered in church by a trained and detached lecturer; in ninety-nine other cases out of a hundred they are fretful scoldings with a grand name. The grand name does not at all impress the child, who for many generations has called them "sermons," "pi-jaws," "raggings," and so on, and loathes them no less, and listens to

them no more, under their new title. Now, as always, the child wants a command, with a calm assumption that he will obey it, and a short emphatic reprimand or a smacking if he doesn't. Brevity is the soul of punishment. There are a few logical, reasonable little souls in the world who prefer to know the meaning of orders, but I fancy the majority of small folk are admirably represented by two ladies of ten and twelve who once honoured me with a long visit, and with whom I attempted an occasional dose of reason. The autumn morning was cold, and paddling was in question :—

"No, it's too cold to paddle to-day."

"Oh, but we're not a bit cold; mayn't we paddle?"

"You said the water was cold yesterday, and it will be much colder to-day. Besides, it's beginning to rain."

"Oh, we were only funning yesterday; and indeed there was only one teeny weeny spot of rain. Mayn't we go and paddle now?"

"Look here, Beatrice, do you remember last week when you both had colds, and had to stay in bed for breakfast, and cried and said it was hateful?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, paddling about in icy cold water, catching crabs, would give you another cold exactly like that, and you would have to stay indoors; and even if it got quite hot again for two or three days you wouldn't be able to paddle. Surely there is no sense in risking all that, just in order to go into the sea this morning, when you wouldn't enjoy it a bit because it is too cold, and no other children would be there for you to play with. Surely you must see the sense of that?"

"Oh, yes . . . and now may we go and paddle?"

It has struck me sometimes, too, that the people who are really able to generalise about children (so far as such a thing is possible, which is not very far) must be extremely few —fewer than the authors of books about their management. The ordinary parent knows only his own children intimately; the casual friend of numerous families knows the small folk chiefly in their party frocks; the schoolmaster and schoolmistress in many cases only know the "lessons" side of their charges' characters. Extraordinary revelations can, and sometimes do, come to such persons about a child whom they think they

know quite intimately. The polite, graceful little guest of an afternoon has party manners to match her party frock, and it is only when she comes to spend a month with you that she brings the other frocks and the other manners. You have heard that she can be very naughty; you know from experience that she can be very good; but you suspect that she is not always "on the mountains" —if I may adopt an expressive phrase from the Salvation Army vocabulary. I listened once to an interview between a small day-scholar who had just returned from school, and her mother :—

"Have you been very good to-day, chick?"

"N—no" (hesitatingly).

"Oh, fie! You were naughty?"

"N—n—no."

"What then, dearest?"

"Well . . . comfortable."

The question which will concern your daily life most, if this lady comes to stay with you, is what she means precisely by that word "comfortable." It is all the minor evil deeds which she will perpetrate during the "comfortable" period which will puzzle you. Scoldings and moral lessons will avail

very little ; they will be received either with polite silence and resignation, or with the stern rebuke once administered by a seven-year-old-gentleman whose morning ride had to be delayed by a lecture on the impropriety of keeping dead crabs in all his trouser pockets : " They were alive when I put them in. You are wasting a gweat deal of my pwecious time."

In dealing with very small children there is one fact no less inconvenient than certain ; it is impossible to be sure what they are really thinking. You give a country boy two shillings to come home from some provincial theatre in a cab if it is raining ; it rains heavily, he engages the cab, and comes home on the box because he wants to drive. A child appears with her fringe cut off, and asserts vehemently that it was all an accident. " I was bending over the fire, and snipping with the scissors ; and then quite suddenly I saw the hateful fringe go up the chimney." A small lady demands " a bigger doll than Patty's," and is given one, on the understanding that she shall not go and triumph over Patty with an assertion that her doll is biggest ; but presently Patty is found in a high state of indignation, while the other

lady stands by protesting eagerly: "I didn't say mine was the biggest; I truthfully didn't; I only came to Patty and said, 'Let's measure dolls.'"

How much of all that is wilful and deliberate —*i.e.*, punishable naughtiness? These are trivial types of far more serious problems—which are not all, by the way, confined to sinners of this age. I remember once having a little sick person of fourteen to stay with me, with whom some small surgical matter went wrong; producing rather serious results because she kept silence about it, in spite of a previous promise to tell at once about such accidents. She protested resolutely that she "hadn't wanted to worry me, and didn't think it would matter"; but probably the child was afraid of what the doctor would do, and was now telling stories, and had in any case broken a promise with most serious consequences. Was it a case for punishment? It is ridiculous to assume that children are always telling the truth; it is criminal to assume that they are frequently telling stories, and the person who boasts about any child on earth, as a schoolboy of my acquaintance once boasted about his master, that he "knew his mind as well as

if he had been down there with a candle," is talking utter nonsense. The funny little brain works in a fashion of its own. We ourselves introduce with one hand the confusion which we try to smooth away with the other. How on earth, for instance, can a child of to-day understand the meaning of politeness? What can its idea be of good manners when in one sentence we inculcate some old-fashioned piece of good behaviour, and in the next nine sentences narrate to a bystander as a good joke some shocking piece of rudeness of our own? A small person was once scolded for rudeness because, a recently-departed visitor having stroked her hair for ten minutes, till the ribbon had come off, and a curl was in her eye, and nursery tea was waiting, she had at last lifted up her voice and announced very softly and politely: "I should *like* to go away." The woman who was scolding her had just been narrating how she had at last driven away a thick-headed and fatiguing visitor by sheer open insults. I think most children have sufficiently pretty manners to know instinctively that they had better not do a third of the things which they see their elders doing; but in this matter of manners, modern grown-

ups have disqualified themselves for the position of teachers. If there is a business in life where an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory, it is in the social education of youth.

If one can imagine the case of a person who has really grasped the precise extent of a child's fault, and has so avoided that most fatal and irremediable of all faults, unjust punishment, one sees this person confronted next by an extremely difficult question :— What punishments are possible for this fault? Nowadays, every form of punishment which affects the health of the sinner has been put aside ; and quite right, too. The deprivation of food and fresh air, the boxing of ears, the terrors of dark rooms, and a score of other similar tortures—which seem, by the way, to have done remarkably little harm to our ancestors—have been denounced and expelled from the *régime* of the nursery. Furthermore, every little novelty in this line, harmful or harmless, seems fated to be connected with some sensational case of cruelty, and to be swept away into the limbo of the impossible by an outbreak of idiotic, indiscriminating popular fury. If a woman intends to be cruel to her child, everything that

she does bears the taint of malice and cruelty, and ought to be denounced accordingly. But unfortunately popular indignation (which is mostly a fine name for the reckless raving of autumn evening newspapers whose readers will have no more of the sea-serpent) fastens on any such strange-sounding penalties, in the case of a man or woman whose treatment of their children brings them into the grip of the law, and makes it absolutely impossible for any parent to adopt the new penalties, however effective and proper. I have no desire to discuss any familiar legal cases, but two or three of the hysterically-denounced "tortures" which I read of in them struck me as highly original and harmless punishments, which would be worth remembering and recommending if their use had not been rendered practically impossible by popular hysteria. The fact is that when you have put whipping aside, effective punishment can hardly be said to exist; the guardian is helpless before a resolute and reckless child of twelve or thirteen, and the child very soon knows it. To send a person of this sort to bed, and pull down the blinds and lock the door, may be a dire penalty for a heinous crime—if your moral authority happens to be

sufficient to keep the person in bed. Otherwise the culprit gets up, dresses and gets out of the window if he is a boy, or makes up stories to herself and plays original games with the pillow and bolster for playmates if it is a girl. This is to assume—quite gratuitously—that the child does not like lying in bed with nothing to do except dream. Again, punishment by deprivation of certain pleasures such as parties, coming in to dessert in the evening, hockey matches, pocket money, etc., implies, first, the existence of these pleasures, which in a quiet country house is not always certain, and, secondly, which is much less certain, that the child has weighed its treats and its naughtiness in the balance, and deliberately preferred the treats. A young person of my acquaintance was fined twopence every morning by her governess for being late for breakfast; but, unluckily, she had soberly considered the question whether a quarter of an hour extra in bed was worth twopence, and had decided that it was. The absence of sugar in tea has a faint pleasing aroma of fashion about it which makes up for its nastiness; and, so long as you cannot force a small person to eat dry bread, its appearance on her plate is a punishment

which simply means that she does not have sufficient food. These time-honoured penalties are admirable so long as the culprit feels the disgrace attached to them; if he does not mind that, you have merely made yourself ridiculous, and might as well resort at once to my method when I am in charge of a child who cannot be persuaded or threatened into some necessary action or abstinence. I simply offer a shilling; and make it two if necessary. I fancy that a good many experiments in the management of children, made by persons without authority to take extreme measures, have ended in similar fashion.

Sentencing and executing criminals outside the nursery must be an extremely easy matter to a person who has ever tried it inside. The prisoners who are removed protesting angrily that they are innocent, that they are always being punished unjustly, and that this is the most flagrantly unjust sentence of which even you have ever been guilty, are repeating words with a very familiar ring about them, but which have moved you more when the court of justice was being held in the nursery. Again, in the case of the outside prisoners, you have no uneasy feeling

that your own carelessness and spoiling have helped to produce the disaster. But, above all, these prisoners whom you sentence to twelve months' hard labour cannot punish you ten times more than you can punish them. They cannot move about your path for dull days afterwards, murmuring with ostentatiously ready obedience: "Yes, if you want to"; "Of course, if you choose"; to all propositions of work or amusement; nor say good-night and good-morning with the minutest possible kiss which small round lips can give; nor tell you in deeply hurt martyr voices, when you visit them in bed, that they "want nothing more, thank you." Perhaps women-folk are less easily to be "got at" by these affecting ways than the other sex; indeed, I am told that they are reserved for fathers, uncles and male hosts. Yet I should doubt whether the martyr's mother is altogether impervious to such arts, which alone can put to rout all mathematical precision in the management of the nursery and the schoolroom. In home life, I am inclined to repeat, the thorough-paced rebel cannot really be dealt with by any practicable punishment. He or she starts the fight with odds of a hundred to one on him, and wins

in a canter. Violent, continual, corporal punishment is an absolute impossibility as regards one's own children; and other punishments are either farcical, or liable to produce unpleasant comments among servants and neighbours. This new interference of public opinion with the relations of parents and children has done so much good since Mr. Waugh created and fostered it, that the world must be content to pay a certain price for it. When you let loose public feeling into a new channel, you have released a great flood of common sense, Christian charity, hysteria, prompt sound action, and garrulous idiotic chatter. Is it worth the price? I say yes, but I can conceive the possibility of another answer.

The influence of corporate life is so great and immediate that schoolmasters and mistresses are well accustomed, first, to hearing about the difficult character of some new pupil, and the desperate measures which they will be obliged to take with him, and then to seeing him subside at once into the ordinary school life with no more incursions into sin than any healthy-minded child ought to make. Presumably, from the complaints which one used to hear some years ago,

this corporate sense was strong only in boys' schools; but all that appears to have changed. The youth of girls is for many reasons more difficult to deal with than that of their brothers; but, on the other hand, girls' schools are founded and superintended nowadays by women with very high qualifications for their work, so that the education and *morale* of their establishments is quite equal to that of first-class boys' schools and colleges, and the corporate sense can be trusted to do equally good work in both cases. A few rules with inevitable penalties for breaking them; a careful study of each child's character for at least a term, and no serious penalties until the study is complete; non-intervention so long as the child's companions can deal with the case, and absolute accuracy and justice when intervention becomes necessary; that is the modest receipt for making a good school, given to me by the headmistress of one of the best schools with which I am acquainted. A well-balanced sense among the pupils that they are trusted almost absolutely, but that here, as in the world outside, retribution for wrong-doing is almost inevitable, takes from punishment all that

notion of personal revenge which is the cause of half the rebellion against it. Yet boys' schools have still one immense advantage over the others ; they have one punishment left in them to which the most reckless inmate really objects. That power possessed by a schoolmaster, with the full approval of popular opinion inside the school and out, to apply the birch to soft and safe places in his pupil's anatomy, is an advantage in his favour which it is hardly possible to exaggerate. No boy engaged in some piece of wickedness could sit down for a minute without an uncomfortable recollection that he may have to pay a short, sharp, but exquisitely painful price for it. There was a little maid once who had been punished for some wrongdoing by a long and highly complicated process, including a prolonged lecture, various periods of silence, and some extra bed-time, and who, being reproached afterwards by her brother for brooding over her wrongs instead of banishing them at once from her thoughts, answered wearily: "I can't make my mind sit down." Her brother, who had not quite caught the point of the remark, said to me afterwards: "Very often I can't sit down either after Mr. B—— has punished

me, but I'm hanged if I sulk as long as Betty does." He was quite right. With a few exceptions, men, children, and horses sulk under punishment in proportion to its duration. On the other hand, I have had my moments of sympathy with Betty's mother. Betty required a good deal of correction, and punishment becomes difficult in proportion to its necessity. When you have eliminated corporal punishment from your weapons, you have kept nothing for the final conflict, and have allowed any resolute opponent to see that his ultimate victory is a foregone conclusion.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, I suppose, that punishment is only a valuable part of the education of children when wielded by a perfectly just guardian who is prepared to go all lengths in using it. If the child's naughtiness has no limits, and your punishments have, a small sinner will realise this fact quite as soon as the judge, and, having reached your limits, will proceed to enjoy himself. There will always indeed rest a certain doubt as to the power of the Deity to interfere with a decisive stroke. "If God wanted me to be good, and I wouldn't be good, which would win?" is

an eternal nursery problem. But the earthly guardian's retribution will soon become contemptible. It counts for little enough, I suppose, in any case. Love and patience are the last secret of child management, the innermost writing in the innermost adytum of nursery life—love, which can force a response at last from the chilliest little soul; humble patience which knows how to wait for the harvest.

Chapter VII.

AT PLAY.

THE modern child at play is a subject concerning which, to put it mildly, more nonsense has been written in the course of the last five years than on most others. The habit of generalising from newspaper paragraphs is a very natural one among the (rapidly diminishing) number of persons who are not behind the scenes of the newspaper world. There are, I am told, several people left in this country who are not aware that penny weekly newspapers which devote themselves to chronicling the thrilling movements and actions of people in "society" are not always easy to fill, and that blanks in certain pages are occasionally filled up by the office boy—or some one equally responsible—with statements which show a high degree of imaginative genius, meriting payment and promotion, but which do not require the attention of the more serious sociological student. These innocent persons are thrilled

and impressed and pained to the bottom of their honest souls by descriptions of the life so feelingly described by the office boy. So deep is the impression, especially when the young man's imagination has been playing round the lives of upper-class children, that such tales are remembered for months, repeated continually, and finally weld themselves together into a conviction that these children are lost body and soul.

This, I say, is a perfectly natural conviction. The wife of the country clergyman is quite aware that her own children get up at half-past seven ; breakfast with the governess in the schoolroom soon after eight ; do lessons, with an interval for cake and milk and a walk, till lunch-time ; lunch on beef, mutton and milk pudding, with chicken and bread-sauce for a treat ; do lessons and walk, bicycle, or ride till tea-time ; go to church at proper intervals in the week, and to mild children's parties once or twice a month, and otherwise to bed at half-past eight every night. She is equally aware that all her neighbours' children do the same ; that she herself, and all the women of her acquaintance would go out of their minds with rage if anyone told an improper

story in the children's presence, and would regard as a pestilential nuisance anybody who proposed, except at Christmas, to take the children to more than four parties a month. But all these folk have the most touching faith in the newspaper paragraph, and are sure that the world outside their own quiet country-side is peopled with white-faced children who drink champagne, and flirt, and go to bed at ten, and generally speaking have forgotten more vice than their grandmothers ever knew.

As I have said in an earlier chapter in this book, these children do exist, and since many of them are the offspring of brilliantly clever men and women, it is most desirable that their lives should be reformed. With all due respect to the office boy of that penny social paper, I doubt whether he or his readers are very intimately acquainted with the precise portions of these children's lives where reform is possible or even desirable. When a child has inherited the wits of clever parents, it is good to cultivate them, and it is impossible to cultivate them in absolute tranquillity. Moreover, I was told once by a great medical authority—I think I may say, as regards the nursery, the highest medical authority in

London—that the visible ill-effect of high pressure is not at present considerable among youngsters of this class. With their immense recuperative power and easy adaptability to change, children go back to school after their Christmas holidays, and to the seaside after the riot of a London season, and show few signs of being the worse for it all. There are exceptions, as I say; if you will, many painful exceptions; and it is quite probable that we are laying up a store of disaster for the next generation. Yet the sober fact is, as regards the present one, that these children can stand an incredible amount of racket, over-eating, over-study and variety without being an atom the worse for it; and that waves of nasty talk and nasty sights can pass before their minds without the slightest ill-effect. I am a warm advocate for remonstrance with the mother who permits the first, and the ducking-stool for her, as I have said before, when she allows the second, because, though the mischief may pass by in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, in the hundredth it does not pass by, and it is a sin and a scandal that such a risk should be run without the slightest object except amusement; but I do allege that the amount of

this mischief actually in progress, even in London, is greatly exaggerated.

In the country it is for all practical purposes unknown. The nursery and schoolroom departments of a large country-house might be the ghost-room of Glamis Castle, as a rule, for anything that the ordinary guest sees of them. There is a separate staircase, whose carpet is half-way in grandeur between the pile of the grand staircase and the linoleum of the kitchen stairs ; there is a long passage with mats and steps which are deadly traps for the unwary ; the schoolroom and children's bedrooms are furnished and decorated on a scheme of their own ; here are sofas on which one jumps as often as one lies ; here is a table on which the ink is upset at least twice a week, and a bookcase whose top shelves are surrendered to litter because they are uselessly out of reach even with the aid of a chair ; and here are great maps of Europe and England on the walls, and between them one or two old family portraits of eighteenth-century boys and maidens, banished from the rooms below ;—little folk who have once pored tearfully over the same dreadful compound multiplication sums ; whose hearts, too, have once beat high with

youth, and love, and ambition, and are now quiescent in a little dust. The children who work here to-day can see from their own separate seat in church on Sunday the huge old-fashioned monuments, with swords and urns and a score of heathen emblems, narrating pompously how the folk who bore these names found it "dulce et decorum" to die for their country. The life of such children—by far the commonest life in their class—does not strike one as especially unwholesome, nor its ideals reprehensible.

The abnormal child-life, common in a very small portion of London society—it is called, I believe, by certain persons "the smart set"; but as every woman in London who perpetrates some more than usually outrageous piece of folly is said to belong to it, one must use charity and discretion before including people in it—is a bad business, but, I repeat, a very, very restricted one. It is utterly beyond hope of redemption, since it depends on the idiotic whims and selfish fancies of offensively wicked women whose rule is paramount in their nurseries, except in the numerous cases where they care nothing at all about exercising such rule, or in the equally numerous cases

where it is cut short by proceedings in the divorce court. At the risk of making vain repetitions, I want again to insist on the fact that the numbers of these persons are as contemptible as their morals, and that the accounts of their doings which fill certain papers are wildly out of proportion to their importance in the world. Such narratives are, in point of fact, paid for at so much per inch in hard cash; the women advertise themselves as openly and freely as a soap-maker advertises his wares; there is a tariff for such advertisements in every newspaper office in London, and the dinner-parties and receptions of these women, their costumes at Ascot, their departures to Paris, and house-parties in Scotland are the principal source of revenue of one or two daily and a large number of weekly papers in London. When, as at present, it is the fashion to be seen with children, this class of woman takes hers out with her to Cannes or the theatre, just as the soap-maker adds a new and fashionable scent to his soaps; and both of them advertise the fact in the newspapers, and at the same charges. It would be a pity, however, if the people who are induced by common-place advertisement columns to buy

the soap were persuaded by the other advertisements to believe that the ladies in question either are at present, or are ever likely to be, of any influence in the social world. They mix a little with the saner part of the world, and are tolerated with lazy contempt until they do something which puts them altogether outside the social pale ; but to suppose that their actions, especially their dealings with children, are at all ordinary, or admired, or are in the least likely to become more common, is a very foolish idea. They have humble and respectful imitators, just as every dancing girl has who raises herself from the Paris gutters to fame at the Moulin Rouge, but the proud eminence of one and the other has an equally limited circle of admirers.

With the overwork and foolish amusements of children whose parents are simply too busy to look after them, I have dealt in another chapter. In their case it is more the quantity than the quality of such entertainments which is foolish. Exaggeration is the note of the age, but one cannot too often, or too seriously, protest against the mischief which it does in the nursery. The excess pleases nobody. Host and hostess cannot give any pleasure to tired and fractious little

guests at a party if they turn their house into a temporary combination of the Alhambra and the Savoy Restaurant. The effort too often ends in the fashion of a little scene which was once enacted at a children's fête at the Botanical Gardens, when the hostess was trying to organise a game of 'Zoological Gardens':

"What animal will you be, Kitty?"

"The bear, please."

"And you, Geoffrey?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, think! Will you be a snake and crawl?"

"No. Thank you."

"Would you like to be a tiger and roar?"

"N–n–no."

"Well, what do you want to be?"

"I want to be sick."

This is the most entirely stupid treatment of a child in the world. Even during the Christmas holidays one party more or less does not greatly concern these little folk. A small friend once told me that her brother was "quite moderately vexed" because he was not going to a certain garden-party one afternoon in the season; he had been to a dance the previous evening and had eaten

too much; he was going to another party the following afternoon, and would probably again have too many ices; his "appetite and drinkatite," the sister assured me gravely, would be better for a rest.

Again, however, let me assert that even in the middle of the London season, and at Christmas-time, the immense majority of parents, so far as my acquaintance goes, are adamant in restricting the amount of this amusement. The ten-year-old daughter of a great lady, who is sometimes (quite falsely, and to her own boundless rage) accused of being in the "smart set," received over sixty invitations to parties one summer; her mother accepted five of them for her, and sent her into the country to avoid two of these. There is no surer way of getting oneself disliked among schoolroom guardians than by issuing invitations direct to the children without asking leave first, so that they may be declined if prudent. Outside the objectionable set of people to whom I have referred, I doubt if there are a dozen houses in London where such direct indiscriminate invitations would be tolerated for a moment, or the individual who issued them allowed any longer to play about in the

nurseries which he was thus trying to demoralise.

The three or four weeks of the Christmas holidays, and the ten frenzied weeks to which the London season is now reduced, may, I think, however, be put aside when considering whether the amusements of English children do or do not conduce on the whole to a sound mind in a sound body. This latter is the more important a matter because at present the large majority of English children of all classes and all ages are the most charming companions in the world; from no point of view can the little folk of any other country with which I am acquainted bear comparison with them; and this state of affairs must not change for the worse. They are more picturesque and better dressed even than their French contemporaries, whose costumiers never, it appears to me, take the trouble to devise an individual dress for their young customers, but merely cut grown-up models in half. Their perceptions are quicker and their sympathies wider than those of German children, who are too much and at too early an age absorbed in the routine of school-work and examinations. Personally I like the children

of Finland next to the little folk of our own country; the effect of the mixed boys' and girls' schools of Finland is an admirable one; the influence of that most charming story-teller, the late Herr Topelius, was as wide as it was excellent, and the mixture of Swedish, Finnish and Scots' blood has produced a delightful result. But such generalities—though I must protest that in my own case they are the result of some experience—are uninteresting.

I should doubt very much whether the brief, happy riot of Christmas ever did much permanent harm to a child. The fun of a London season at this age has, on the contrary, nothing whatever to be said in its defence. Outside these inconsiderable areas of time and space, how do the children of England amuse themselves?

Well, in the first place they amuse themselves. The outsider must be a person of very wide and intimate knowledge of his world before his proferred entertainment will count for much against home-made amusements. New parties, and novelties at them, are not really very thrilling incidents in this world: "It's the going which matters to us, not the where," a small excited bundle of

wraps once explained to me; but a prolonged cross-examination at the end of the Christmas holidays discovered the fact that the parties where she had enjoyed herself most were two small ones, of extreme simplicity, in very familiar houses. Cataracts of new toys which pour into the nursery on birthdays and other festivals are equally a mistake, especially the mechanical ones. "I hate toys which play with me, instead of letting me play with them," said a discontented ten-year-old child once; and any nurse will tell you that after these have been played with for a day or two, and their antics regarded with a grave wonder which has always seemed to me to indicate rather more contempt for the inventor than any other feeling, such toys are put away once and for ever. A small child of my acquaintance who had sixty-three toys given her one Christmas, and could with difficulty be persuaded to finish unpacking them, and showed me a nursery cupboard ten feet high as the place where she kept her old toys, never paid the slightest heed to old toys or new except when unsympathetic guardians interfered with her own private amusement of turning on taps all over the house and watching the result. It was during

a gloomy period following a certain occasion when she had discovered a new and fascinating looking tap in the cellar—(presenting herself later in the drawing-room, dripping with beer, and murmuring anxiously: "I do fink vere's a new tap in the cellar what wants a jug under it")—that she wound up three or four mechanical toys, and studied their movements with eyes which said plainly, "Here, indeed, is one of the mysteries of life. I am being punished for playing with an enchanting tap by people who think this sort of thing funny!" To play at bears, lions and wolves, to paddle, bathe, run races and climb trees—these and everything else that is perfectly simple and happy and proper are the eternal tastes of childhood, which no man or woman could ever really supersede, thank goodness, if they lavished time and money on the effort. I have never myself met any one under the age of twelve in any rank of life who would not sacrifice nine-tenths of the amusements which you could offer them for a donkey-ride at the seaside. The donkey-man at Westgate, who is a philosopher and a warm personal friend of mine, is of opinion that they prefer this even to bathing: "They takes to it instinctive-

like," he told me once; "big and little they'd ride them sooner than anything, and cry to go on a donkey afore they can speak. It's because our Lord rode one: and for the same reason, too, you may see a cross on the back of every donkey." Six or seven weeks of thoroughly evil amusements could be completely obliterated from almost any child's mind in any class of life by a short stay at the seaside, where every hour (except the rainy ones) is full of the profound satisfying pleasure belonging only to occupations which are known and loved because they are known. The joy of the seaside is the only perfect and universal joy of childhood; it differs hardly at all at any age or in any class of life. The sand-castles of Westgate may be a trifle more elaborate than those of Margate, where the pure pleasure of digging has rarely time to get exhausted; nurses dry your feet after paddling at Westgate, whereas at Margate you dry your own; at Margate the mid-morning refreshment is limited to nougat, whereas buns and chocolate and milk are spread out on the Westgate sands towards half-past-eleven; but the mind and soul of this sea holiday are the same from Tynemouth to Land's End. Indeed, I am

not quite sure that the small folk whose parents' incomes are written in two figures, have not certain advantages. The processions of babes made up on the sands by the Margate niggers, who march round and dance, and curtsey and sing to the inspiriting sounds of the banjo, are watched with deeply envious eyes by nurse-guarded ladies and gentlemen on the promenade above. I remember, with secret joy, the shattered nerves and blanched cheeks of a "society" personage who was honouring the Cliftonville Hotel with a short visit, and who, descending into Margate for a brief survey of this unknown and vulgar territory, found the two nurses appertaining to her six-year-old daughter conversing with a friendly cabman, while the small child herself was taking her turn of being instructed by "Uncle Bones" in the art of curtseying. The poor woman stood for a moment, just long enough to see her offspring reseated in the circle of bare-legged, beaming contemporaries, while another nigger prefaced a comic song by a command to the children to "sing up in the chorus, or I'll come and scratch your feet;" then she searched out the nurses and sent one of them for the child, and I fear that, in

the words of an old and famous song, "The rest of that story was smack, smack, smack." Yet I have grievous doubts as to where I should find that small person if her nurses' attention had become once more engaged in the neighbourhood of those niggers; she confided to me (having been condemned to talk French for the rest of the day, and being a little mournful in consequence, with a tendency to drop into poetry) that: "Quand je suis grown-up j'irai toujours jouer avec les niggers; dans le doux achetez-et-achetez" [in the sweet by-and-by?] "je serai un nigger moi-même." Unfortunately her return to London became necessary, and even promises of the water-chute and the Hippodrome could hardly mitigate my little maid's sorrow: "London's so stately," she lamented, "one must always wear one's best hat. Oh, I wish I could live in a bathing-machine here, or in a red house in a dear squeezy little town like Westgate! Men wouldn't come to lunch there, and stroke your hair, and make jokes all the time, and sit at the table long, long after you've finished, talking as if their reputations were at stake."

Apropos of these latter words, by the way, I have wondered sometimes why people who

profess to know something about the nursery world express their disbelief in the wit and wisdom which comes from it. It is so much easier to repeat genuine childish humour than to make it up, that nobody in their senses would take the trouble to manufacture it. Yet my wonder at this is not quite without comprehension, as I remember my own astonishment on being confronted for the first time with a nursery philosopher and humorist, whose mother had declined to allow her to come with me to Southsea for some naval pageant or other, I forget what. "You have deprived me of a life-long memory," was the stern rebuke administered by this eleven-year-old person to her parent; and then she turned away in dignified anger to join in a conversation which was going on about the arrangement of a charity concert. Someone suggested that Maurice Farkoa—I am sure he will forgive my mentioning his name here—would sing without charge for this charity, as "he was fond of saying he had been hungry himself once, and must be ready to help anyone else who is." "Suppose," suggested the small lady, "he is merely resolved never to be hungry again himself?" And the promoters of the concert

eyed her doubtfully, feeling that there was more in her suggestion than had any right to be there.

In an earlier part of this chapter I have referred to the amazing number of toys given to some children nowadays. These are, in fact, sometimes only a small part of the presents which some of them are allowed to receive, and over which, I should say, some kind of censorship might well be established. The free acceptance of presents of any sort or value, from anybody who likes to send them, on any occasion, is not very wise; nor, in the case of a good many children, does it conduce to pretty manners. Men and women—who are not governed in all their thoughts and words by strict reason—occasionally ask a child what it would like for a birthday present, and then express the freest disgust on receiving a full and complete answer. But if the question has been put to some very popular little person, who throughout her short years has been loaded with useless gifts by all her acquaintances, is she likely, unless her mind is unusally adamant against such corruption, to refuse this chance of getting something which she really wants? The lists drawn up by children at

Christmas (always excepting that famous one which began : " A desert island. A baby of my own. A Shetland pony . . .") are abhorrent to my mind. The whole essential pleasure of a gift, alike to recipient and donor, is gone if it is taken for granted that the gift will come ; it is no more a present than new boots are presents, or new summer vests, or the German story-books for which the governess has asked with strictly educational intent. When the whole affair has been a systematised business in your child's mind, he will not think very much of the gifts, nor be in any way chary of criticising them, nor, perhaps, be backward in asking for them. It is impossible too often to repeat the unkind and ungracious remark that three-quarters of the givers of children's presents and children's parties are persons who desire their own amusement as much as that of their guests. We like these wondering exclamations from the beginning of life ; we like to see the excited pleasure, to hear this pretty gratitude, so freely expressed, so cheaply bought, compared to the hardly-won thanks of experienced and critical elder guests. The ordinary parent owes us nothing for administering such pleasures.

If I owned a popular family—to revert for one last moment to the question of amusements—I should demand two conditions for the parties to which I allowed them to go; simplicity in winter and open air in summer. Likewise I should claim and freely exercise the right to refuse an invitation, without giving any reason, at any moment between its receipt and the hour of the party. Life is not long enough, nor is the human brain always sufficiently alert, to devise pretty excuses for your children not going to eight parties a week, and then to remember which lie you have told to which person. Three small people go to A. on Tuesday, and for that reason, and that reason only, they are not going to B. and C. on Wednesday and Thursday; this is the simple truth, and as it does not look nice in black and white (especially when A. is a duchess and the other two are not; an accident which happens constantly, sometimes not without foresight, but mostly by sheer malignant bad luck) it is best to say nothing at all. The rule of simplicity would be equally easy to enforce. It is an obvious rule, carrying its own recommendation and explanation on the face of it; moreover, houses where it is

enforced, and houses where frantic exaggeration is the rule, are equally well-known, and can be marked for the future. Open-air entertainments are, of course, the rule in the country during summer-time, but in point of fact are hardly less easy in London. The trees of Kensington Gardens are quite as delightful a place for a tea-picnic as any country wood, and have no single drawback except that you may not light a fire under them, and must clear away the bits rather more carefully than usual afterwards. Kew Gardens and the Zoo are incomparably superior to any open-air entertainment which could be found within ten miles of any ordinary country house, and an afternoon at either place offers the additional attractions of a drive in cabs, motor-cars, or on the top of an omnibus. Combinations of health and pleasure are the easiest things in the world to arrange if you honestly wish to arrange them, and have the most ordinary acquaintance with juvenile tastes.

It is worth while, perhaps, even to take a little trouble to study these tastes and combine this health and pleasure, especially in the case of a girl who, less often than a boy, has the routine of school life to counteract the

other mischief. I doubt whether a girl of eighteen, standing on the brink of an older society world, looking back on her childhood, judging its hopes and aims and fruition as such young folk will, would have anything but gratitude for a parent who had so guarded some of her freshness, who had held back something of novelty for the second act of her life's drama. This is often a stern and just young judge, whose love and gratitude will not be granted without cause. If her presentation at Court to-morrow is but one item in a long, gorgeous succession of parties stretching back to her fourth year; if the future holds no possibility of new pleasure, no scrap of amusement which she has not long ago tried and liked, and tried again and liked less, will she say thank you now for the carnival time of those Christmas holidays and London summers? Satiety is a horrible sensation. To begin routine labour listlessly, wearily, hopelessly, with the brain-fag of yesterday's work heavy on us, with the feeling that we have done too much of this task already, and must do much more; such a fate is almost intolerable. But what must be the depression of an educated, intelligent boy or girl when, added to all this

is the touch of self-contempt which affects the resolute pleasure-seeker? To stand in the white dawn of youth and feel satiated with jam-puffs! To be eighteen and feel so tired out with theatrical mummery and fancy dress balls that we must abandon all hope of fame and go to bed! That is not a very glorious ending to the years of childhood, nor do we owe many thanks to the guardian who has compassed it for us.

Chapter VIII.

SOME FRENCH FRIENDS.

THERE is a popular idea in England, arising, I think, from the inanities of French writers for the young —no one in France can write a child's book—that French children do not exist, but only men and women of the world in trousers and frocks of various lengths, who make love, and know all things, and never get into mischief. The belief that there is any essential difference between the small boys of different countries and centuries (though one may have preferences among them) is a strange one to people who have studied them in life and history. I have been privileged to know intimately two twelve-year-old boys, one French, sleepy-eyed, beautiful to behold, roaming the lanes of the Loire Inférieur country and the Boulevards of Paris in a pink print suit, with brown socks and a white cap; the other English, freckled, grubby, running riot amid Hampshire woods in clothes which, like the grass of the field,

to-day were and to-morrow were cast into the old clothes-basket;—I have been honoured, I say, with the frequent companionship and most intimate confidences of both, and I would not like to say in a hurry which was the more sinfully delightful person of the two. Both these persons had that awesome love of snakes, toads, guns, fireworks, crabs and ferrets which is the foundation of every healthy boy; both could eat any given quantity of food at any moment; both had spent a day in prison, been wrecked several times, broken a front tooth, and been blown up by gunpowder experiments; and I should be perfectly contented to be cast on a desert island with either of them, provided that he retained the ordinary contents of his trouser pockets. The return of both for the summer holidays was equally greeted by their respective neighbourhoods with lamentation and prophetic sorrow. One small difference existed; for, whereas the good folk of Hampshire would narrate, with very precise knowledge of the fact and its concomitants and consequences, how they had met my friend Bertie, with a small case of dynamite cartridges in one pocket, and a ferret in the other, and meditating fondly

over a couple of Board of Trade life-saving rockets which he had bought in Portsmouth; the peasants round St. Nazaire on the other hand regarded my friend Paul with superstitious awe, alleging that he walked along the road with his hands in his pockets, and could wreck boats on the Loire, and cause houses to fall down and windows and gates to break, merely by looking at them. The result was that Paul was not laid in wait for, chased, and occasionally caught and smacked with quite the frequency which was desirable. I suppose it is true that the boys' schools in and round Paris are not very desirable places; but *per contra* I have met some extremely unpleasant young gentlemen from London schools; and it strikes me as unreasonable to expect perfect cleanliness of mind near any big city. Yet it is the rule in most people's experience. I know a fifteen-year-old Paris schoolboy (an excellent all-round athlete) whose affection for the society of his sisters and their girl-friends (a matter of comment to certain English visitors) was due solely to the fact that I had lent him an india-rubber snake, which curled and wriggled about in such enchanting and life-like fashion that a boy who did not scheme to drop it

accidentally in a room full of girls would be dead to all healthy ideas of wit. Another fourteen-year-old acquaintance of mine called René, whose parents were not especially strict, had never been inside a single Parisian place of entertainment in his life except the Nouveau Cirque; he collected stamps; had never heard of Cléo de Merode; and, one day when he was coming somewhere with me, and had finished his school *déjeûner* before I arrived to fetch him, he came and ate another lunch in my company with perfect satisfaction.

The prompt and complete success of the Nouveau Cirque in Paris is at once a proof of the innately healthy taste of French children and of the care taken of these little folk by the upper and upper-middle classes of Paris. No one except foreigners or the most countrified of provincials is taken in nowadays by the "family" and "school" matinées advertised by the Parisian theatres and music halls; and the Nouveau Cirque is frankly recognised as the only possible place of amusement for nice children. Even here the extraordinary love of French managers for dull indecency leads occasionally to blunders, though they are, I think, the

result of mere stupid thoughtlessness. I remember once noticing a nasty little incident here; and on a subsequent evening when I wished to take a large nursery party I sent a message to the manager asking that the objectionable bit might be left out. The request was granted immediately, and I believe that the incident in question was permanently expunged. The strict care of their children attributed to the provincial middle and lower classes in France is, however, either a myth or, if it ever existed, is dying. I have seen more than two or three instances of this. I remember a certain typical occasion when I was lunching with the village doctor and his wife in a country district in Eastern France. Two daughters, one twelve, the other fourteen or fifteen, were present, but this did not prevent the host from relating to another guest how a certain irregular *ménage* in the village had just broken up, the man taking another mistress and the woman another lover. "But, father, aren't M. and Mme. B—— married?" asked the younger girl in bewilderment; and she was told no. "But they have got three children," she insisted; at which the doctor and the other idiot who

had been taking part in the conversation looked at one another and laughed. "These things arrange themselves sometimes," said the doctor, and his little daughter went on eating her lunch in silence, with puckered forehead and puzzled eyes. Presently her mother asked if she wanted some more pudding, and had to repeat her question before the little maid could be roused from her reverie. She was engaged, you see, in reconstructing the theories of life which so far had served to satisfy her mind. It struck one as a pity.

Accidents of climate and custom make it more easy to amuse children in France than in England. The Boulevards of Paris, with their shops and toy-sellers and picture-covered kiosques, are a scene of perfect bliss to your small companions, who will watch it all with a contentment which would not be increased, if you could believe it, by the purchase of the toys and flowers. The dolls and dolls' furniture in the Nain Bleu are more tempting; but here the choice is too bewildering for any one desire to become insupportable. I think the happiest of the little mortals out walking here are some brother and sister strolling about with a

silent and slightly embarrassed uncle. Uncomprehending but docile he stops when they stop, goes on when and whither they desire, buys only two sticks of chocolate, and speaks but to ask occasionally: "Tu t'amuse, dis? Quelle amien sericuse!" not understanding the extreme gravity with which such youth accepts its happiest moments. I was amazed on returning to England, after some months in Paris, to note afresh how much effort and money is spent on amusing children of all classes here. The Children's Happy Evenings Association and innumerable boys' and girls' clubs make young lives in London almost as happy as they ought to be; ladies demand funds for summer holidays for every little Londoner who would otherwise stay at home; the Invalid Children's Aid Association requires toys quite as much as bandages; *Truth* sees to it that every sick child in London has a Christmas present; and the children's ward of the London Hospital is about the gayest nursery in the country. The person who really wants to appreciate this should apply to the Director of the Assistance Publique in Paris for an order to go and play with the children in the French State hospitals. The order (which

is a necessity for every visitor except the Sisters of Charity, who come twice a week and read religious books to the babes) admits you to the barest (and doubtless most sanitary) wards in Europe, round which a good-natured but puzzled nurse conducts you as speedily as possible, stopping only to explain certain "show" cases as she goes. Nobody has got anything to read, to do, to look at, or (except for two hours on Sunday afternoons, when relations come in) to speak to; no one complains or asks for anything; the little folk just lie waiting to get well, quite patient, but direfully and dreadfully dull. If you explain politely to the nurse that you are not interested in the latest treatment of appendicitis, and would rather talk to her patients, she is quite willing to allow it; and your feeblest jokes and dullest stories will be a *succès fou*. Nobody has the slightest objection to your bringing books or toys or even sweets here, provided that they do not offend against the last sanitary fad; it is merely that these hospitals being under State control, no private person thinks of interfering, and the result if hygienically admirable is horribly dull. In the Rue de Sèvres children's hospital, with its six hundred beds,

I have seen a bound volume of "Chatterbox" in English passed round a ward for the sake of its pictures. In all my life I have never seen a more admirably managed or more mournful establishment than the big home of the Enfants Assistés in the Rue Denfert Rochereau. During half-a-dozen visits here I never caught sight of a toy or a picture-book, and among the numerous gloomy uniforms of such institutions which I have seen in different parts of Europe this is certainly the gloomiest. Even in the poverty-stricken children's hospital in Rome there is some attempt at decoration and amusement, and an occasional relaxation of rules. I remember a great friend of mine who was taken there, and was allowed to keep on her curls, instead of having them cut off according to regulation, because she was an artist's model and the only support of her family. Her income—the thing was seven years old—would of course have been seriously diminished by the loss of the curls. Flowers and pictures surrounded her; by her side was a little wooden brush, and when you wanted to please her particularly you brushed the soft black locks, while the babe sat up in bed, looking with grave dark eyes across

the palms and roses of her hospital garden to Frascati, where her mother and sister lived on a pension paid temporarily by some artists while the family bread-winner was being "cured" of consumption. And now that Beatrice is cured of that and all other earthly ills, I really do not know what happens to her family.

Perhaps it is only in contrast to the activity and gaiety of English schools; but this air of dullness seems to hang, too, over a large number of French upper-class schools. The convent schools, about whose suppression so much genuine vexation was felt, and so much indignation manufactured, may have educated the soul, but they were good for neither the mind nor the body; though it is true that French children prefer and can thrive under stricter regulation, less liberty and more religious exercise than English or Germans. Though the latter have far more work from their earliest years, those whom I have encountered have always struck me as unusually contented persons. The streets of these German towns at mid-day are gay with their friendly faces; it takes you but a very few days to make acquaintance with all their

brothers, sisters and cousins, who honour you with their company at lunch, band-parties and tea in riverside gardens. Unhesitatingly they accept your statement that you can't know too many of them or see them too often. "Come to the Kurgarten this afternoon," whispered a small maiden to whom I was proffering an invitation for the following Sunday: "Gretchen and Elsa will be there, and then you can invite them too."

Lest I should seem by implication to accuse the rulers of these schools of allowing any casual male visitor to explore their establishments at his own will, let me explain that long experience in many climes and languages has brought to perfection my knowledge of the weak points of foreign school authorities. I speak of foreigners only, because, as a rule, in England there is no difficulty in gaining access to a child with whom or with whose parents one has any acquaintance; liberty here being only bounded by the dictates of common sense. But it is not everyone—I boast openly and without stint—who in the presence of a French or German school-mistress has my rapid perception and ready action. Yet even to my skill and experience the first call upon a

child at a new foreign school is nervous work. You are shown in to the salon, and the mistress comes in saying plainly with her eyes: "Who on earth are you, and how dare you come here?" You answer first with a conciliatory look, every scrap of German or French having probably fled in the stress of this alarm, and then murmur some words about desiring to see Marie or Elsa or whoever it may be. To represent yourself as the small person's uncle is a worn-out, stupid device, inducing immediate suspicion. It is best to tell the truth, merely insinuating your knowledge of schools and willingness to conform to their customs, and hastily disclaiming any intention of taking the young person out to eat ices. The child having arrived, I have sometimes found it sound policy to pretend to be a little shy with her, and to talk mostly to her mistress; the idea to be conveyed being that you are there more as a duty than as a pleasure. But infinite variety must be introduced into these proceedings, and success—the success which means that ever afterwards the young lady and several of her best friends will be allowed to come to tea with you, and even to Versailles on Sunday to see the fountains play—

is only granted to a rare combination of genius and experience.

I think that the most inaccessible young persons I ever encountered were two ten-year-old ladies at the school for daughters of officers of the Legion d'Honneur. The earliest preliminaries of a visit here are a written permit from the parents and a signed order from the Chancellor of the Legion d'Honneur, but these are minor matters. On arriving at the school, buried in the lovely forest of St. Germain, you are confronted at the outer gate by a deeply suspicious concierge, who looks contemptuously at your permit, hardly troubling to hide her conviction that it is forged, and then passes you on into a passage where you undergo another searching examination from a lady sitting at a sort of ticket-office in the wall. She, eyeing you with even more pronounced disfavour and suspicion, passes you on into the visitors' room, at one end of which sits another stern personage in a glass case, who commands the room with all-seeing eyes, and who on my first visit paralysed me to such an extent that my French verbs and pronouns reeled to and fro in frantic confusion, and I gave her to understand that a

certain dolls' toilet apparatus which I had with me was brought as a present for herself. Then Hélène and Jeanne come in, and on subsequent occasions bring various Maries and Lucies and Madeleines—goodness knows what all their surnames are—and, sitting on benches round the walls, the little maids talk in half-scared whispers of their quarrels and lessons and dinner. They are all dressed in black, with class-ribbons of different colours, and hair cropped short, "till our première communion," explains Hélène, "after that we are supposed to be able to brush it ourselves even if it is quite long." On the walls of the room are the Tableaux d'Honneur, where are inscribed every Sunday the names of the young persons who have behaved with perfect decorum during the past week. Hélène's and Madeleine's names are nearly always there, Lucie's having, I regret to say, only appeared there once ; and, from my private knowledge of certain previous proceedings, I fear that even this solitary appearance reflected more credit on the young lady's powers of dissimulation than on the mistresses' judgment. Prize-giving day here, to which I had the honour of being invited—Mademoiselle Hélène, who

was to receive five first and three second prizes, saw to that—was a long and magnificent ceremonial. The children sat in lines down the room, while behind a long table on a raised dais were generals and marshals, resplendent in blue and scarlet and gold, and a few ladies, who smiled kindly as someone read out names and awards, and the little maids came up one by one to receive their pile of books. Madeleine returns smiling gravely with a prize for unblemished good conduct during the year. But, oh, chèrie! what about that afternoon in the garden when you and Lucie . . . I forgot. I promised not to tell.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SICK CHILD.

ONCE upon a time I had the pleasure of accompanying a woman to the sick-room of a young lady who had been condemned to spend two or three days of her tenth Christmas in bed, and listened to the following conversation.

"Dr. Ellis came straight in," said the sick babe, indignantly, "and asked me if I had had too much plum pudding. I simply stared at him."

"He was only joking, beloved."

"Joking?" The little lady wrapped her night-gown round her, and shook her curls angrily: "It is disgusting. I shan't speak to him to-morrow; I shall just look at him. There are some people with whom one must put on one's haughtiest manner."

"Well, what would you like to do now? Will you have the cards and picture-books which came yesterday?"

"N-no, thank you. I did look at them while I was unpacking them."

"Shall I go on reading you 'Alice in Wonderland'?"

"Oh, no! It makes my head go all wagglety. Tell me just one thing—if I am very good all day mayn't I go with the others to-night?"

"Dearest, I am afraid you mustn't. I am so sorry. Perhaps on Saturday. Please do try and forget about the party to-night."

"I c-can't m-make my thinking s-stop while I'm in b-b-bed."

"Can't you think, now, of anything you would like to do?"

"May I have Binkie and all the kittens?"

"Won't they fight on the bed?"

"Will they?" hopefully.

"Would you like Aunt Edith to come across and see you?"

"Oh, yes! Now, at once, with Binkie."

A small person of this description mostly wants everything "now, at once," and when she is in bed, whether for a day with a plum-pudding pain or for a week with bronchitis, she is what the nurses call "a handful." Sick children as a rule have no medium in illness. They are fractiously, fidgetingly unwell one hour, with their own and everybody else's muscles and nerves on the jump,

and crying out for new food, amusements, companions, and stories with an untiring resolution beside which the clamour of the Athenians would have sounded infantine; the next hour they are delirious, or in a state of collapse which terrifies the household out of its wits. This rapidity of collapse is the schoolmaster's chief difficulty when one of his charges falls ill. How much and at what moment is the parent to be told? An incautious word in his telegram, and the boy's mother arrives by the next train to take up her residence in the house for a fortnight, while the headmaster, his wife, the matron, and most of the under-masters may as well abandon all pretence of school-work and resign themselves to an endless discussion of whether Tommy can have chicken for dinner or go out for an hour in the sun. There was a school once upon a time where Tommy had a cold which ended in a touch of pneumonia. His mother arrived, and, after an interview with the headmaster, stayed until the end of the term. While she was there the school had, for practical purposes, one boy in it and one supreme ruler. At the beginning of the following term she returned with Tommy, saying that he was

still delicate, and she would like to keep him under her eye for another week. This time, however, she interviewed the headmaster's wife, and as a result was obliged to superintend Tommy—and Tommy only—from a neighbouring hotel.

At home retribution comes for many a sin of mismanagement when some child must be shut up in its room even for a day or two. Fractious and uncomprehending, half-indignant and half-frightened, the small person lies in bed, asking for amusement and bored by it when it is given, demanding favourite companions, puddings, and toys, and turning away from them all with petulant distaste when they come. The nurse gets nervous at this endless fretfulness, which is making her small patient worse, and grows alarmed by the disobedience which later on may be a vitally dangerous matter; the child reads her nervousness by lightning flashes, after the manner of such small folk, and his own uneasiness grows. The conditions are not favourable if a crisis comes.

There is a homely proverb which applies with great force to illness in the nursery. However much you may have spoilt your children, "it is never too late to mend"; and

the first moment of even the most commonplace malady is a very good time to begin. Brutal as it must seem to be stern now, it is worth remembering that discipline will mitigate your patient's malady even to-day, while to-morrow it may be a matter of life or death. Stop arguing about rules and begin to enforce them; get a trained nurse, if necessary, in spite of the patient's wrathful protestations and tears, and your own—probably quite erroneous—belief that he "will not obey a stranger"; do not fetch every book, picture, dog, cat and toy which he asks for. Above all do not let the young person's contemporaries into the room whenever they or the other child please; children are delightful companions for grown-up sick folk who know exactly when they have had enough of them, and can say so and take measures to give effect to their belief; but with very rare exceptions they are the worst in the world for their own kind. This fact would probably be denied by most guardians, whose own duties would grow very severe if they might not occasionally send Betty and Jack to "sit with poor Jim for an hour and amuse him," but no sick-nurse would dispute it.

Punishment is a hard saying when its subject is a fractious small invalid; but if prompt obedience cannot be had without it—well, obedience matters and your own feelings do not. The case is the same with lessons. During a long illness, lessons are simply imperative, not only because the loss of five or six months' education is an extremely seriously matter for young folk nowadays, but because the discipline which comes in their train is invaluable and irreplaceable in the life of the little invalid. No one who has had much to do with invalid children can have failed to experience the disastrous results of trying to obey that common, lightly-spoken and most foolish of medical orders: "Don't worry his brain with any lessons for the next few months." Doctors who give such orders seldom fail to reverse them after a few words of remonstrance; their idea, of course, is to avoid any risk of over-strain or fever; but the notion that an ordinarily sane child runs any such risk from a few hours of ordinary lessons, administered by a person of even moderate common sense, is simply ridiculous. Nothing can take the place of such work in a child's life; without it the most skilled and devoted nurse could

not fill with regular occupation half the hours of a child's day, nor prevent the lassitude and fretting which result from idle weeks of illness. The lessons in fact may do a perceptible amount of harm, and yet not as much harm as their absence.

It is asserted nowadays, with many hard facts at the back of the assertion, that a good deal of physical degeneration may be noticed among the young folk of the day; and reformers, of course, have much to say on the subject. The question posed by a theological lecturer as to how many angels can sit on the point of a needle is an easy one compared to the problem of how many theories and fads can find confirmation in a newly-presented fact. The discovery, for instance, that the present generation of children shows signs of physical decrepitude is an opportunity not lightly to be passed over by vegetarians, anti-vaccinationists, the societies for the reform of school discipline, and the proprietors of toed stockings, cellular underclothing and patent foods; who would each and all, they tell us, undertake to present a child at the starting-post of life in perfect condition for the race. Yet it must have occurred to some of these good folk, and to a thousand other

amateur physicians, that the above-mentioned discovery is rather a judgment—and not a very satisfactory one—passed on their nostrums than a peg on which to hang a repetition of their advice. For a good many years past we have dressed and fed and taught our children under the illuminating guidance of scientific if slightly contradictory teachers, with a good deal of extraneous help from afternoon callers, penny magazines, sky-signs, advertising canvassers, ambulance classes and international exhibitions; and the result is visible in the children round us.

It is not at first sight a satisfactory result. To anyone believing that a sanitary millennium had begun in the nursery because nursery authorities had instituted cold baths, fruit, open windows, fewer cakes, and a change in the material and shape of various undergarments, it may come with something of a shock. One's first inclination is to search for an answer to the statements. Unfortunately facts and figures in confirmation have been provided by certain scientific statistic collectors who have a reputation for sifting such statements with expert care. Are all our nursery physicians incompetent quacks, and their advice solemn humbug? It sounds improbable.

A good deal of scientific knowledge has been brought to bear on the hygiene of child-life during the last twenty years, and its prescriptions are carried out by parents who care and parents who command the governess to care, by several guardians who have carefully studied the matter for themselves and grown wise, and by numerous guardians who, if not very wise, are occasionally threatened with intelligence. Tea is over nowadays for a young lady who says she "doesn't want any more bread and butter, but is full of room for anything else"; and the fellow-guests, old and young, of a small creature at a London tea-party all looked properly shocked when he proclaimed: "Thank goodness tea is over; in one mouthful more I should have burst," and begged his attendant to "carry me upstairs to the drawing-room, but be careful not to bend me." Had not two of the babes just shaken their heads at an offer of meringues, saying cheerfully, and with some pride: "Mummy says we mustn't eat cream things; we'll get fatted"? We have less and less use nowadays for the first part of the old wish: "Si jeunesse savait! Si vieillesse pouvait!" Youth knows altogether too much about its own health. The clothes,

food, and daily life of modern children who are properly cared for are, we may take it, the last word in hygiene.

The fact is, however, that the new child is not, like its predecessors, a little animal. We are asking its brain to work; *hinc illæ lachrymæ*. From children of both sexes in all ranks of life, and at all ages, we are demanding hard mental labour, which shall put them on an equality with other nations in a race in which we have already lagged much too far behind; and the child who is compelled so to labour is not, and never will be, the physical equal of the half-educated, slow-witted, cricket-playing little idler of thirty years ago. You may vaccinate a child with every serum discovered by science, guard it from disease by every conceivable precaution, fill it up with the most fashionable brand of cod-liver oil and patent breakfast foods, and give it underclothes of silk, wool or lawn, buttoning at the side, in the middle, or nowhere, but when its brain works hard its body will pay a price. A certain small number of children thrive under hard work. I have mentioned a preparatory boys' school where the children do over six hours' stern work per day, and a girls' school at Brighton where

the children get up at 6 A.M. and do eight hours' work per day, most of them surviving it pretty well; but this is work done in the most perfect sanitary conditions, including sea air, which can be devised. In bad conditions —the conditions of an ordinarily unhealthy town—children cannot do such work, absolutely necessary though it be nowadays, without risking the payment of a frightful price. Great heights have great precipices. All the hygienic care in the world will be wanted henceforth to keep these small folk on their feet on these new mountain-tops.

I am aware, of course, that the inquiries and discoveries of the present century on this subject have concerned themselves chiefly with a class of children whose poverty is a sufficient explanation of most of their ills; so that the problem which these little people present is as simple as it is painful. Their need of early and severe brain-work is twice as imperative as that of the children of whom I have been mostly writing, while the conditions of their life make it twice as difficult. For the moment, however, I am not even confronting this larger though simpler and more familiar question, but merely pointing out that if the conditions

of all child-life in the kingdom were raised to those of a millionaire's nursery, with a sane guardian at the head of it, children must still pay a price for necessary modern brain-work. The normal healthy child of eight or ten will do nothing quietly; and when you put it to do modern lessons among people who live on motor-cars, conduct two-thirds of their correspondence by telegram, and want to prosecute half the express trains in the kingdom for furious loitering, in ten years' time you will probably have to send it to bed for a nerve-cure. Put a boy to work full hours at a Board-school, and, later on, half-time at a factory, with plenty of home-work and worry besides, and unwholesome food to complicate matters, and the state of his physique will be below modern army requirements. It would be hard to say in which class of life the child pays the higher price for his knowledge. But unless we are prepared to face this physical deterioration, and to induce the children to abandon their sixteen years of undivided cricket and football for the pursuit of knowledge, it is difficult to see how any philosopher, statesman or prophet can save the supremacy of England.

CHAPTER X.

A BIOGRAPHY.

IN a history of the Archdeaconry of Stoke-upon-Trent, one of those sober records of unexciting but eventful years whose mere covers are a protest against modern unrest, Mr. Sandford Hutchinson tells of a parish in North Staffordshire with a peal of five bells, of dates stretching from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The bells all bear inscriptions; the three earliest some words which are more or less a variation on the old "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam"; the next: "Given by I. L. I. in memory of his daughter. October, 1804"; while on the fifth is writ large: "Presented by Richard Henry Jones, J.P., Mayor of Croxted, to commemorate his third election as Mayor. November, 1875." And here is narrated in a few lines the rise and growth of that passion to be known and remembered, that disease of fame which marks our time. Would you know the names and lives of the men who built England's cathedrals, those

cathedrals which are so incomparably the finest in the world? Go search, dig, read in museums, local and national, and perchance you shall light on a bare record of the architects' lives and deaths. Would you have a history of the architect who designed, the builder who built, and the local magnate who laid the foundation-stone of the new little chapel where discourses are preached every Thursday evening concerning the programme of some political party, and the glories of the Liberator Building Society or its latest successor? *Circumspice.* Look round the chapel. For sure they are all graven in capital letters on some prominent stone in the most prominent part of the building.

But who, one may ask, blames the new craze? Not I indeed; I do not write for that. There are men in the world to whom celebrity (which means talk in newspapers) is genuinely loathsome, who hate the crowd's applause with frightened hatred, who will rarely do their best work for fear the outside world should hear of it. But, heaven help me, I am not one of them. The disease of fame is on me sorely; I crave it even as these others; and like so many of them I

see that the chances of it are small. I think that persons who have tasted for a moment a very little notoriety—a few newspaper-cuttings, the applause of a few political meetings, an election as chairman of a County Council—are more passionately desirous of fame, *i.e.*, of its greater and more difficult continuation, than any others. What do we all want? some contemptuous onlooker may ask. They said of Zola that the object of his life had been to have a mile of newspaper-cuttings per annum about himself; and this, I suppose, is all that my own ambition amounts to; this and a daily bulletin in the papers a week before my death, and a column or so in them when that ever-approaching terror has passed by. So, with a small weakling hope that in that day some man may say: "He has given a little bit of fleeting fame to this or that one; let us do the same for him," I mean henceforth to write biographies feverishly, and begin now with one which I was asked to write eighteen years ago. I will tell where and how.

It was a hot summer night in August, and I had come to visit a friend in her bedroom—an old, square, low-ceilinged room, with bars

to the windows, a table full of childish treasures, and coloured pictures on the walls, vivid in tint and incongruous in subject. Outside, the summer moon stooped from a clear, dark-sapphire sky and lighted it all; shining white on the occupant of the room who was sitting on the window-sill in her nightgown, a little, pathetic atom of humanity outlined against the far-off, patient stars. I told her that she ought to be in bed, but perfunctorily and without intention of enforcing my statement, being in private sympathy with her cool costume and position. Then, with an arm round her—is it only by a freak of erring memory that one's arms were round some child-figure so often eighteen years ago? Now one stretches them out and lo! *vacuæ sedes et inania arcana*—we began to talk. The hour and the stars might have brought religion on the tapis, but the child was one of a large family, and, as is the case, I think, in most big families, its members were not inclined to sentimental religion. The saying of prayers was on a level with bathing and teeth-cleaning, a mere part of getting up and going to bed.

"Is it very hard to do something great so that everybody praises you?" was the large

question which met me. Yet I knew something of its atmosphere, which was that created by Agnes Strickland's 'Lives of the Queens of England,' lately studied at a house where the child had been staying. I answered (and believed then) that it was easy if one looked out for opportunities and truly meant to use them. I had no knowledge then of those cathedral architects, of men who took credit for other folks' work, of men and women who as a reward for doing something great had their hearts broken and their lives and fortunes taken away.

"And someone would write a book about you, and you would be famous, and remembered always by everyone?"

I answered yes again; yet even then I had a suspicion that Plato may claim to be remembered, but not a thousand Platos. I talked to her of the number and minuteness of the histories and biographies written nowadays, and told her of Simonides who, years afterwards, identified a number of dead bodies by remembering where each person had sat at a banquet before the banqueting-hall fell in; but I recognised uneasily that I was telling her of the exceptional man's great feat of recollection. Could even his memory

call to life, and clothe again with voice and feature, every philosopher whom he had heard lecture, every epigram-maker with whom he had argued, every little boy, however beautiful, who had brought the disputants dates and coffee? With a child's quick instinct she followed the doubting thought which had introduced this story.

"They might forget about writing the book, even if I had done something," she said uneasily; then, with happy inspiration, "But you might write it! And I tell you what"—another inspiration, and her voice rose till I had to interpose a warning about attendants in the neighbouring nursery—"we will write one another's lives! Promise."

We both promised, even, if I remember right, discussed some details of the earlier chapters; while the stars of the scented summer night looked down, laughing kindly at us, mocking us with their milliard years. And the same stars looking down on a cross in Austell Churchyard which records how one of the two biographies ended four years later, when its heroine was in her fifteenth year, reproach me now for my long faithlessness.

Norah was the fifth child and third

daughter of Sir James Hamilton, of Austell Hall, Yorkshire. She and her eight brothers and sisters were divided into groups, who saw little and thought less of one another ; so that the elders have but a vague recollection of the small brown bundle who sat opposite to them at schoolroom breakfast eating bread and milk. They had a delightful nurse, rapidly-changing nursery maids, a kindly governess, but, so far as I ever saw, no education, moral, intellectual or religious. They daily read and learnt bits of the Bible, and a hymn out of a large oblong hymn-book with big letters, and certain prayers, and a piece of German recitation ; and if they had been asked suddenly which was the most important, a majority would have voted for the German. They had no natural or acquired religious beliefs, even in the Devil, though maybe they had a dim feeling that life would be tame without him ; and although (like a greater philosopher) they might rejoice in the triumphs of religion and morality, such as the defeat of the Armada or the timely discovery of Guy Fawkes, it was not without satisfaction that they woke up in the morning and found that the World, the Flesh, and the Devil still held their own and died hard.

Of course they questioned no accepted doctrines, but had merely a belief qualified by a little scorn in all things extant. There are, I think, many hundreds of simple child cynics like that. Truth, for instance, except between themselves—even perhaps except between the members of each little coterie—seemed simply uncalled for; and to their minds in their earliest stage of reasoning, the arguments in favour of truth-telling seemed hopelessly deficient in logic. As each of them came out of infancy to child's estate they groped their way, I suppose, towards higher ideas of right and wrong; but for long years they used to puzzle uncomprehendingly over those lines, "He who does one fault at first, And lies to hide it makes it two," holding firmly that if the lie were successful it nullified the fault. In their minds was firmly fixed the newer and more popular definition of a lie—"An abomination to the Lord, but a very present help in time of trouble." With poetry and fairy tales, the heroes of Scott or the Round Table, and the elves of Grimm and Hans Andersen, the children had no traffic. These were not put in the youngsters' way, and the young folk did not seek them.

I cannot quite think how to explain that, without being in any way a prig, or dissociating herself from her companions, the little heroine of this biography did not entirely subscribe to all their doctrines. Many such small persons have an adytum of self which no one can quite pass; in the rough and tumble of family life you do not often come near it, but it is there. I know a child who, in addition to all the regulation prayers of daily life, has for years said certain others, kneeling up in bed in the dark. At a movement of her room-companion or a footstep in the passage outside, the little lady will bury herself back in her bedclothes like a scared white rabbit, but the prayers are always said. I know another who, struck by something which she had read in a life of Charles Lowder, fasted once a week, going without butter, sugar and other small matters, doing extra lessons, and taking no part in any games on that day, for a long time—a year or two, I think—without anyone in her big *entourage* noticing it. Jokes, escapades, tears and illicit apples pass from hand to hand as you sit round the schoolroom fire. No one, so far as you notice, refuses to laugh, to bite at his apple, abuse his

lessons or sympathise with the lately whipped member; but if you have a good memory some odd looks and words in the circle will drift back, suggesting an occasional lack of accord. I remember, for instance, hearing on a certain evening how the junior part of the Hamilton family had planned some mild iniquity connected with a telescope; the carriage was at the door to take the elders and some visitors out to dinner; the smaller fry stood in the hall watching their departure, when, with a sudden awkward movement of memory, one of these elders turned back and said, "You are not to touch that telescope while we are away." There was consternation in the nursery party; looks flashed from one to another, disobedience would mean the stoppage of next day's half holiday; lies, where several people were concerned, were risky, yet here they seemed inevitable. Then Norah came forward; perhaps she declined to recognise the lies as inevitable, perhaps she wanted the case made generally clearer:

"But, father, shall you ask if we have touched it when you come home?"

The naive inquiry told its own story, and temptation was removed. Of untruthfulness and insincerity in her elders, Norah

Hamilton had less comprehension than any child I ever saw. At the conclusion of a certain visit to Croxted Rectory, the rector, a great friend of hers, said good-bye, and begged her to come again soon; could she manage to come to-morrow? The six-year-old visitor accepted gravely, and drove home to announce that she had promised to go back next day. Explanations that the invitation was not meant, was only given in joke, and so on, first bewildered and then annoyed her; she was resolute that she had been particularly asked to come back; and finally her elders, becoming really puzzled as to what had happened, took her over next day to Croxted to inquire. I need hardly add that she was kept there.

Unkindness was another ill which was to her simply incomprehensible. She saw an ordinary amount of it among her family in these nursery days, looked at it, and did not believe in its existence. She would puzzle over a seemingly unkind action for some time, look round for other motives, find them, sigh with relief, and forget all about it. Among recognised methods of revenge, for instance, in the Hamilton family quarrels, was the queer and very effective one of salt-

ing one another's gardens; unusually picturesque and well-kept children's gardens, these were, so that a spade-full of garden salt could destroy the pleasing results of a good deal of labour and care. Thus it was a very severe form of retribution. Once only, I am told, it was done by the seniors to "the little ones'" gardens; I know not why; they had let loose or killed one of their elders' rabbits, perhaps, or been guilty of (probably unintentional) tale-bearing. The small brother did not mind much; his crop at the time was mostly mustard and cress, to which he considered salt a not inappropriate addition; but "Miss Norah," said her nurse to the rather shame-faced executants of justice, "was dreadful upset. She did not cry, only turned very white and stared at it as if she was puzzled. Then she shook her head and said: 'They ought not to have done that; I don't think they ought to have done that.' But at last, after thinking a bit, she looked suddenly quite relieved and said: 'Perhaps they only did it to kill the snails.'"

An elder brother who went to school at this time fell ill just before his first term at Winchester, and returned to a long era of doctors, nurses, idleness, chloroform, cross-

ness, selfishness, and, generally speaking, all the ills which flesh is heir to; which the legator bestows in such abundance, and of which the legatees, when rather young and without any guiding hand to help them, mostly make such very bad use. Norah had been promoted to the school-room now. Lessons both here and at school afterwards were not, perhaps, made very interesting, but she went through them stolidly. I quoted to her once the seventeenth-century Provost of Eton: "Give me the plodding student. If I would look for wits I would go to Newgate. There be the wits"; and she seemed to find some consolation in Sir Henry Savile's rather unhappy dictum. Then, with the purchase or discovery of a certain riddle-book, small, thin, bound in green, there opened a new vista of joy. To her brother in bed or on a morosely occupationless sofa; to her father at dinner and to friends at tea-parties on summer afternoons (though always knowing for certain beforehand that they were not tiresome, and even then only for a short time) she propounded riddles out of the little green book; and indeed, though I myself loathe the things, I must allow that some of these were rather good. . . . or was it the grave, pleased little

face of the person who was asking them, one evening I remember wondering, as the family and two or three familiar guests sat at dinner; roses and Virginia creeper lying down the table; shaded candle-light falling softly on pale, nerve-dominated faces; awkward pauses interspersing conversation whose style was mostly a youthful pose, and whose wit always stung deep and bitterly.

"What was the only animal existing on the day of Creation?"

The question filled one of these pauses, and everyone turned a willing ear, though no one professed to attempt a solution of the riddle. There was a judicious interval, and then came the answer in a slightly perplexed, doubtful voice, as of someone who was not quite sure whether it was funny, vulgar, blasphemous, or in any case likely to be acceptable:

"A great shay-'oss." Norah looked doubtfully round her, awaiting approbation or disapproval.

"A great shay-'oss!" I lay back in a chair and laughed at the riddle—and its propounder—for the rest of the evening. I laugh and cry now to think of it. Indeed,

to my poor brain it is to-day the only really funny riddle in the English language. It—and Norah—cleared the dull, storm-charged atmosphere, and changed us all to healthy human beings; it broke into the Nirvana of day-dreams in which the invalid brother passed his life, with health and wealth and fame for dream companions, and made a wholesome human being of him too for the evening. The Hamilton family had wits, and aired them pretty freely; but, as I have said, they mostly stung, and the green riddle-book was the best. Where do such books and relics go to, I wonder? They are put away very carefully at the time by some sister or old nurse, who breaks her heart as she touches each object; and then they vanish into space through the locked cupboard doors.

Norah became ill next spring, and after being in London for some weeks under a doctor's care, came home in the late summer a recognised invalid. The elder brother, at Oxford now, had also come home ill again, cross and tired, having only managed to scrape through "Mods" because a famous examiner, stern of countenance and kind of heart, had suspected his pain and prompted

him outrageously in a critical viva-voce. They were a curious pair of sick folk; the boy exacting and selfish, full of laments, bad temper, and exaggeration of every little ill; the other perfectly silent in much more real suffering; gay, grateful and sweet-tempered always. On a little plot of grass near a summer-house two seats used to await them every day, one a long, ordinary couch, the other a square, mattressed hammock, swung under awning-covered poles. Both were littered with cushions and quite comfortable; but, of course, sick moods vary each day between lying and sitting; and at whatever time the brother came out of his room, it was nearly always to find Norah sitting on a bench in the summer-house, waiting for him to take his choice between the two seats. As they both got better, one sick nurse looked after both, and later on Norah's former "nursery" nurse took charge. With both of these it was accepted that the boy's whims had to be attended to first; Norah had taught herself really to believe that he required the chief part of such attention, and herself only the odds and ends of it. How every little detail of such hours crowds back into the onlookers' mind to-day, to make a

picture of a purely unselfish life! No imagination-striking deed of heroic self-sacrifice can equal in its effect on our moral nature that quiet, hourly self-surrender whose essence is simplicity—that simplicity which, here as elsewhere, is the result of perfect organisation and strongest effort. Of strongest effort above all; for, as we who may benefit by the self-sacrifice need so often to be reminded, no man, woman, nor child, finds any pleasure in "giving up." Renunciation and pain, though they may be borne willingly for Christ's sake, are pain and renunciation still. Is the struggle worth while? To my dull brain it seems to be worth more than anything else in the world. Of a surety the last teaching of life, the innermost writing in the innermost adytum of human knowledge, is that nothing worth winning, from a child's love down to a million pounds, is to be won without self-sacrifice. But perhaps my admiration for it is merely selfish. There was an angrily-sobbing little maiden once upon a time who complained to me:—"Reggie says, 'To err is human, to forgive divine'; but it seems to me he always wants to be human himself, and me to be divine"; and maybe that I, like the domineering Reggie, have

my own reasons for liking other people to be divine.

The Hamilton family moved up to London for some months, and the confinement and stuffiness of London were more than counterbalanced to the little invalid by the kindness and skill of the doctor who took charge of her here, and the numerous girl-friends who could come in and chatter of books and weddings, love, frocks, and lessons, hearing some secrets, and inventing more. Then came the child's fifteenth birthday; a sudden change for the worse; the sunrise of an October morning when, as the nurse was drawing the curtains, a murmur came from the little patient: "I think I must be dying. I had better say my prayers"....and so went one more sou "out of great tribulation" to its place in the children's home; and all childhood and love itself lay down and died.

"After the fever of life"—do you remember the September evening, dearest, when you read the words?—"After the fever of life, after weariness and sickness, fightings and despondings, languor and fretfulness, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled,

unhealthy state, at length comes death, at length the white throne of God, at length the beatific vision." Twice since then you have come and stood by me—you could not bear, I know well, to look down from your Heavenly home and see us all so desolate and weary without you—and on your lips and in your eyes the reminder of these promises. Yet somehow I do not think I care about them now so very much. I have no part nor lot with them, any more than with the army of saints and martyrs, the legions of men and women, strong, holy, unerring, brave, the troops of white-souled children, who have gone before to claim their reward. Only....the journey to the edge of the dark gulf, and even the crossing of it, have lost half their terror now that you are on the other side.

Non omnis moriar if, dying, I may live on like you, little Norah Hamilton, to make fainting hearts strong, to hold up the lamp of faith, courage and resolution before weak, wandering footsteps. "Not altogether shall I die" if my example, like yours, beloved, may shine out over a waste of years, and light some tumbling, blundering boat through the rocks and shallows; if the memory of my

strong love and hope may stretch across a decade and smooth some stony path for sore, tired feet ; if even a score of people are the better for my having lived, and no human being the worse. Is that, I wonder, the real answer to this prayer of fame ?

CHAPTER XI.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

BEING EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF THE HON. HELEN ESTCOURT-DARCY, FROM OCTOBER 1ST, 1893, TO MARCH 30TH, 1895.

A FEW words of explanation may be appended to these extracts. The diary (published, of course, by permission) is genuine child-work. Names have been changed and a few connecting or explanatory words inserted; but any reader who feels inclined to search for these latter is recommended to look among the most entirely commonplace and uninteresting sentences which he can discover.

The eleven-year-old writer, daughter of two persons whom I have called Lord and Lady Tunstall, and granddaughter of the old man who figures as the Marquis of Draycott, is a nervous, excitable little maid, puritanical to her finger-tips, and with three passions in the world—her mother, her step-mother, and music. Her own naïve record of the

admiration excited by her playing is in no way exaggerated. M. Paderewski sent her a few much-treasured lines of commendation after hearing it; and Mme. Patti once turned to a talkative companion at an "At Home" in Paris, when the little lady had been playing for a few moments, saying, "Please let me listen to this; it is something quite unusual."

It is improbable that the events succeeding "Lady Tunstall's" death, concluding with the re-marriage of "Lord Tunstall" with the Parisian opera-dancer who figures here as Yvonne Vidal, will lead to the identification of anyone mentioned in the diary; but if this happens I hope the discoverer will be so good-natured as to keep his knowledge to himself.

I.

"*October 1st.*—Got up very late and in a bad temper. Impertinent to father. Washed the dolls' house, and Madge and I played at Kindergarten with the dolls. We had sums at lessons. It seems always to be arithmetic day when I am cross. I know the 'Tarantelle' of Heller by heart now, and

played it to my darling in the afternoon. She liked it so much, and went to sleep at last. She has been much worse since that dinner-party at the Hetheringtons, and could not get up till lunch to-day. In the evening father read us 'Sartor Resartus,' and I mended the green curtains of the dolls' house.

October 2nd.—Got up very late again, and was very ashamed. Mother was angry when I went in to read the Bible with her. I cried, but I think it was more because she seemed so ill, and couldn't get up to lunch, only I didn't tell her so. I wrote her a composition on 'Which do I like best, Music, Drawing, or Reading?' Of course, I said music, and she said it was pretty good, but not very; the spelling got all mixed. In the afternoon I read aloud to her 'Mon Frère Yves,' by Pierre Loti, and played her the 'Bee Song,' of Mendelssohn, which I know by heart now. Pierre Loti's books are sodden rot, only mother says I mustn't use all Guy's words.

October 12th.—Played scales for an hour, and went to Portsmouth with father. We had lunch with Admiral Hinfield. Father and I think that Admiral Hinfield teases his black cat awfully. We got back at five, and

there was a letter from Cousin James to say he is engaged with a lady at Paris, which we can hardly believe. He is sixty years old! I made several jokes about this marriage. Sorted a few stamps for Madge, as she wants to begin to keep them. I have got a lot more, and better ones than I thought. Played to my darling in the evening; she liked the 'Etude Mignonne.' She was tired, and went to bed very early, and we read the Bible together. I read her the eighth chapter of St. Luke. She could hardly talk. I cried for a long time in bed, she seemed so ill.

October 23rd.—Mother much better. She and I played at being Madge's daughters, and Madge gave us lessons. After lunch, I read a new waltz by Chopin, and liked it very much. so that I shall learn it by heart; and then I went to dig in my garden. Mr. Lovegrove came. I do hate him so much, though, of course, one oughtn't to hate a clergyman. I hate him (here follow two resolute but unsuccessful attempts to write the word "instinctively"). Mrs. Raleigh came, too, and Sir George and Lady Sinclair, and grandfather brought Mr. Caterton in; so I went straight in, though I had only

got on my old holland frock, and Miss Euan wanted to stop me. I cannot have my darling worried. It is so lovely to see her talking to them all, so high above them all, and everyone knowing it. Mr. Caterton began telling a horrid story about some drunk man, and Sir George Sinclair said, quite angrily, "That sort of story does not amuse Lady Tunstall, my dear fellow." Mr. Lovegrove tried to get her to come to his hateful Infirmary Bazaar, and worried her dreadfully when she said she couldn't. He put his hateful hand on my head, and said he was sure that I would persuade her to come. I stared at him haughtily, and said I wouldn't let her come even if she had promised. Mrs. Raleigh told mother of a very poor family near her, who do not want to show their poverty. She is called Mrs. Bray, and has several little children, who are starving. Sometimes, when they have just a little money, meat comes in. Mother is going to see them to-morrow.

October 14th.—Got up very early, and came to read the Bible with mother before breakfast, and some out of a new book which she has given me, called, 'The Imitation of Christ.' It is a sort of Bible

but not very interesting. After breakfast I played her Schumann's "Berceuse" and the "Menuet" of Paderewski, and I did all my lessons with her instead of Miss Euan. While I worked at the dolls' new dresses, she read me a book about the founding of Mexico, in 1519. In the afternoon Madge and I went to Portsmouth with her. She is going to have some golden cord put round the bottom of our dresses. Madge was naughty, and went off down the street looking in at shop windows all by herself. She said that mother had given her leave to do it last time, and she had saved a little of the leave over for this time. Mother invited me to five o'clock tea with her when we got home, and read 'David Copperfield' to me afterwards. I helped her dress for dinner, and she put on her white lace dress, and I got out some of her diamonds for her, because the Sackvilles and Taits were coming to dinner. She did look so very lovely. I played to them all after dinner, and was very much admired. I cried a little in bed, but only because I was so glad that my darling was so much better.

October 31*st.*—Read 'Frank: a Story of a Happy Life,' in bed this morning. It is

a charming but religious book. Got up early, and had breakfast with mother in her room. She seems to like to have me with her more and more every day. We read the Morning Service together, and then she went into church for the Communion Service. Why cannot I be confirmed and go with her? I feel quite good enough whenever she is with me, and people may be confirmed when they are eleven. I had tea with her, and we went to evening service together; and afterwards she put me to bed. My thoughts were very scattered to-day. I only have got a child's thoughts, and I worry about nothing, oh, nothing, to what comes afterwards in life.

November 1st.—It was All Saints' Day. Mother and I drove over for a treat to morning prayer at Chichester Cathedral. Canon Eyre preached about the Communion of Saints, and said that it hardly mattered at all whether your best friends were dead or alive, they were quite near you always if you were good; but I cannot believe that. I should want to touch her, and speak to her, and hear her speak, or I couldn't bear it. I cried a little, but only a very little, and I don't know why mother seemed so

frightened at it. She held me very tight, and I soon stopped. We lunched with the Eyres, and afterwards I played with baby Eyre and Edie in the garden. After tea we all played letters, but whatever difficult words we could give to Edie she would find them out directly. She is too sharp, it is cruel. She goes to school, but because we were there, and her bloodshot eye, she did not go to-day. I like her very much. After tea Edward put brown paper on his face, and dressed up and frightened us.

November 2nd.—Got up very early and played Brahms' 'Hungarian Dance' with mother. Had to stop because Mr. Lee came to give us a drawing-lesson, which was quite dull. But what can I say against drawing? Not much, to be sure. It is an innocent little amusement. In the afternoon did arithmetic (which I do hate), and then sat with my darling, and worked while she read me 'Silas Marner.' Afterwards I read her a little of 'Les Myrtilles,' by Madame Bersier, which is very pretty.

November 3rd.—This evening Bobbins was very, very ill. Nanna says he has been eating too much groundsel. We gave him brandy. Oh, Bobbins, my darling. I got

up in the middle of the night to see him, and he had died. Mother and Nanna were standing by his cage. They had been giving him medicines, but it was no good, and he died. I cried most dreadfully, and mother took me to sleep with her, and talked to me for a long time, but other people's birds do not die, and I don't see why Bobbins should. Edie Eyre has had hers for years and years. I cannot think of anything else I did to-day.

November 4th.—Sat with mother all morning. Father came in and said if we sat in that room much longer we should both be roast beef. He took me to Chichester, and I played with baby Eyre till tea-time. Edie didn't care a bit about Bobbins. She does nothing but eat sweets. I can't think how anyone can eat such a nasty lot. I can't bear her. I told her she shouldn't come to Madge's birthday next Tuesday, when Madge will be six, and she said all right, she could buy chocolates instead of buying her a present. Madge doesn't want her silly present, but it is hateful to be greedy like her. In the evening the Duchess came to dinner, and brought Westbourne, and a Mr. Nigel. Mr. Lovegrove came, too, with one of his stupid daughters. They are all

one duller than another. Westbourne has come back from Winchester for a few days, because he has been ill ; but he says he was only shamming. I played a piece which I composed myself. I call it 'Chant des Oiseaux,' because it is meant to be the melodious singing of birds. It goes "twt twwwt" on the high notes, like dear Bobbins. They all admired me very much. Westbourne says I ought to put in a "bang-bang" here and there to show a man shooting the birds, and he said many other witty sayings. Mother laughed very much. She likes him, and I like him, too. He was very sorry about Bobbins, and said he would make a tombstone for him, and bring it over He taught us a game. He drew a donkey on a piece of paper which was nailed to the wall. This donkey had no tail, but each of us had a paper tail, and we were blindfolded, and had to try and pin the tail in the right place. Mother and I laughed till we were quite ill. I slept with mother.

November 5th.—Went into Portsmouth with father to buy fireworks. I was much interested in some workmen who were striking, though some of them were drunk, and swore, and said frightful things. (I know

that it is not proper for a little girl to write or speak of such things.) I waited for father in the Pier Hotel, and went on reading 'Ivanhoe.' I am there where Prior Aymer has entered the House of Cedric of Rotherwood, and they talk of the lost Ivanhoe. It is very interesting, but I cannot contemplate my thoughts to it while everyone is talking. In the afternoon Westbourne came with a wooden tombstone for Bobbins. It is so kind of him, but I wish he hadn't written on it: "Hic jacet Bobbins; mortuus edendi. O si sic omnis." He won't translate it to me, but he says it will jolt Edie up like anything if she sees it. I don't think I ought to have told him about Edie eating sweets. Then he let off a lot of squibs and crackers, and burnt my stockings and skirt and hands, and he made me hold some Roman candles, and help him light rockets, and he told Madge that he had filled her bed up with squibs, which would all go off directly she got into it, so that Madge wouldn't go to bed, and at last she slept in Nanna's bed. Then he went home, and directly after he had gone there was a fearful explosion, which blew the fountain to bits. Father says he must have buried a lot of squibs and crackers, and laid

a slow match to it, and lighted the slow match as he went by. I suppose the doctor at Winchester knows best, but mother and I don't think he is very ill.

November 20th.—To-day is my darling's birthday. If I didn't know it I am sure I would not believe she was thirty-six years old. Also father, when he has got a hat on, looks only as if he were thirty. I played her a birthday march, which I had composed myself, and also my new sonata by Mozart. I gave her a little gold locket, with my photograph and Madge's in it. Guy and Stanley and Eric sent her a lovely whip for the pony-carriage, which they had bought between them, and Westbourne wrote to her from Winchester, and sent her a huge hunting-knife, which was very ugly but frightfully sharp. We did not do much. She seemed very tired in the evening. I sat with her till very late, and we read the Bible and talked. I never saw her look so tired, though she could not sleep. I went to bed at ten; but I did not sleep long, and came back to her room. She was so thankful to see me that I would not go back to bed even when she told me to, and Nanna tried to carry me away. I read her pieces

of 'The Imitation of Christ,' and liked it better. It seems to suit you when you are very frightened. At last we both went to sleep.

November 22nd.—I have got a new sister. I saw her to-day for a minute. She is just like baby Eyre, only redder. Mr. Streeter came to-day, and there is a new nurse here, who won't let me see my darling. Mrs. Eyre came over and wanted to take me away; but I wouldn't go. I hid in Guy's room. It is very untidy; an ink-bottle had upset all over some shirts, and he had carved poetry on the wall about the Armada, and Nelson, and Lord Charles Beresford. I want to see mother so dreadfully badly.

November 24th.—A very terrible thing happened to-day. The new baby died. She had only been alive for two days. It is worse than Bobbins, because I had him for nearly a year. Nanna says that Mr. Lovegrove came here and christened her long before I got up this morning. I saw her for a minute; she was lying on a lace pillow on a bed, and everything was white; her face was quite white, and there were heaps and heaps of white rose-buds and lilies-of-the-valley on the bed. The new nurse let me

kiss her, and I brought some white violets from the forcing pots in my garden, and put them there too. Nurse wouldn't let me see my darling. I am nearly mad. I cannot bear it any more. I cannot bear my life without her."

Lady Tunstall died three days later. Helen's account of her first foreign tour is merely a mechanical narrative of sight-seeing in Paris, Lucerne, Genoa, and Rome—sight-seeing into which she was resolutely forced by her father and governess, who were both evidently frightened by her state. Helen understood their wishes easily enough, as children mostly do understand the little plots of their elders, and acquiesced quietly, though she would have given the world to be left in peace at home. There is a short account of the midnight Mass at the Madeleine, on Christmas Eve, to which the children were taken in the vain hope that Helen, from pure fatigue, would sleep through some of Christmas Day. Her uncle came to see them, and told the child stories about her mother, one of which is written down, though barely legible from the shaking of the hand that wrote it. In next day's narrative is a note saying: "I cannot write anything about

her here. I tremble so much, and feel so queer that I get frightened."

II.

"*December 30th.*—Hotel National, Lucerne. We came here yesterday. It was raining, and looked very bare and dreary. There is a big lake and some mountains round it. We went for a long walk this afternoon to the little Monk's Church near the Three Lime Trees. We went into the little chapel where are hung a whole collection of little wax arms, and legs, and hearts. This is all superstition. People who are ill come to the church and offer one of these little things, and then they think they are cured. We walked on and on through the woods. Old women came and asked alms, and said they would pray for us. At the next little chapel, which we found on the border of the wood, there were hundreds of inscriptions like this : " Pray for a poor donkey, that his ears don't grow too long." " Pray for a child, that he may get good marks at school." I was very tired when we got home, but I couldn't go to sleep. At last, just as I was half asleep, I woke up, and some one's arms were round

me, but it was only Miss Euan. I cried most dreadfully.

December 31st.—Father said that he had some business in Lucerne to-day, so we didn't have to go on to Genoa, and I was able to stay in bed till lunch-time. I was so very tired after that walk yesterday. Miss Lester read me 'Une Famille sans Nom.' In the afternoon I practised, but the piano was frightful, and it made my head feel all funny to hear the queer notes. Some people in the hotel did such a very nice thing. They sent the piano out of their sitting-room, "With their compliments to the Hon. Miss Estcourt-Darcy." That was written on a card. Their name is Talbot Smith. Stanley says they are retired grocers, and want to make our acquaintance, but I don't care who they are. The piano is an Erard, and sings all by itself when I play, just like my own. I played all the evening. I played all my own compositions, and some of the 'Songs without Words,' and all my Chopin pieces, and my new Weber piece. I played some hymns for the boys, and some 'Messiah' pieces for father. I went on till past midnight, and quite forgot that it was New Year's Eve. At last I played my own self

to sleep with Chopin's 'Nocturne,' and Miss Lester carried me to bed and undressed me, she says, while I was sound asleep! I never woke up till lunch-time! It is so lovely to be asleep and forget everything."

The early pages of the new diary are taken up with listless accounts of sight-seeing in Rome, with a few scornful remarks about the music of Italy: "It may be the 'home of music,'" writes little Miss, contemptuously, "but the family are out of town;" and an occasional expression of her sick longing to be at home again. Kindly hands were stretched out on all sides in endeavours to console the unhappy little maiden, but she took little notice of them, unless a piano which "sang" was among the proffered distractions. At the end of January the three boys returned to their respective schools, and the rest of the party came back to Hampshire. Here they remained for about a month, and then, becoming alarmed at Helen's continued depression and misery, Lord Tunstall carried her off again to Paris.

III.

"*February 6th.*—Hotel Lafond, Paris. It is a very cold day, and freezing hard. I am not going to put down an account of the thermometer, because I don't understand it. We went to the Bois de Boulogne, to the Cercle des Patineurs; the aspect was very bleak. In the afternoon I practised hard, and in the evening I played to Uncle Hugh. I do so want to be good and forget some of the worst parts, which one need not remember; but I can't succeed. I dream much less now; but I can never go to sleep before eleven o'clock. I wake up very early, but go to sleep afterwards, and have to be awakened up again.

La neige tombe,
Mais dans la chambre
Ce n'est pas aussi sombre
Comme la tombe.

I wrote that myself; it took me hardly a minute.

February 8th.—I practised till nearly twelve, and after *déjeûner* we went out to skate, and stayed till four. We had tea at the *châlet*. There was the most beautiful person I ever saw in my life skating. She

had on a grey cloth dress with fur; and when she took off her skates she put on a great cloak of chinchilla fur, and looked more lovely in it than she did before. She came into tea, and father said: "Why, it's Yvonne Vidal!" I talked to her, and she was very kind; but I could scarcely pay attention to what she was saying, she was so very, very beautiful. I never saw any one like her. Father asked her to come to tea to-morrow, and I do hope she is coming.

February 9th.—It thawed all night, and was horrid and wet in the morning. Madame Berg would only let me practise for two hours. She made me do sums, and German dictation, and read some German history. In the afternoon, about four o'clock, Madame Vidal came. She had got on a different grey dress, with some silver fur and a big bunch of roses, and looked even more lovely than yesterday. She was very nice indeed to me, and asked me to play to her again and again, and said she hardly knew how to say enough about my playing. Father asked her about some masters, and she said she would speak about it to a friend of hers at the Conservatoire to-morrow. She dances at the opera. Afterwards father went out, and we had a

long talk all by ourselves. She was so nice, and so very sorry for me.

February 10*th.*—Got up very early and practised, so that I did not mind when Madame Berg wanted me to do some more sums. The frost has all gone. Madame Vidal came in after luncheon and said she had heard that a Monsieur Conté was the best master I could have; but he might not take me, He would not care anything for money, and he would not mind about father being Lord Tunstall, as they would in England. She said that he was a composer as well as a teacher, and had written an opera, and father has written to ask him for an appointment. We are to go and see his opera to-morrow night, because he might like us to know all about it. Madame Vidal told me all about her life. She works so hard, and is now quite famous. I should like to do that very much. I should like to play at concerts and earn a lot of money. I wish we were not rich, so that I should have to earn money and play in public.

February 12*th.*—Got a telegram at eight o'clock this morning from Monsieur Conté, asking us to come there at nine. Madame Berg said it was ridiculous; but I got up in

a great hurry and we went. He told me to play, and I played him Mozart's 'Variations,' and then the 'Berceuse.' I played them very well; but he shrugged his shoulders and muttered to himself, and then, at last, only said: "I suppose you have no masters in England." He said that he would let us know in a few days whether he could give me any lessons, and when father said that he would like to know something for certain, he told us to go away immediately, because he had no time to talk any more about it. I told him I was going to see his opera to-morrow; but he didn't seem to care a bit. I cried rather when we went away. In the afternoon Madame Vidal came; but she only laughed. Father was going to see the Duc de Lille, but stayed at home when she came. She amuses him very much. I am to go and see her at her house to-morrow.

February 13th.—There was no letter from Monsieur Conté. I practised for three hours, and in the afternoon I went to Madame Vidal's house. She has got a lovely little flat in the Rue de la Boëtie. The electric lights are all hung with lace, and the pictures are framed in lace instead of gold. She has got a table covered with gold ornaments, and

most of them have jewels in. She has got a writing-table of solid silver, and the ink-pot has got sapphires let into it, and the handles of the drawers have got sapphires in them, too. She has also got the most wonderful jewels anybody ever saw. It is too wonderful. She has got an Erard piano, and I played her Mozart's 'Variations,' and the 'Lison Dormait,' and Chopin's 'Nocturne.' Afterwards I sat on her knee for a long time, and we talked about things. I said I would rather like to live in Paris if I might have plenty of music lessons, and could see her every day. I said that soon I would like some more children to play with; but not just now. She said: "Petit à petit l'oiseau fait son nid." I liked being with her so very much. In the evening we went to the Opera and saw 'Castillia.' There was a ballet, and Madame Vidal danced. It was too hateful for anything. She had got only a thin, gauzy dress, and it didn't nearly come to her knees. Everyone was dressed the same, and it was perfectly hateful. I said it was disgusting, and Madame Berg took me away, and father was very vexed. I cried in bed, and Madame Berg heard me and laughed at me. I hate her.

February 14th.—We got a telegram from Monsieur Conté this morning, telling us to come there at half-past one, so at that hour exactly we were at his door, but he was still at déjeûner, and kept us waiting for twenty minutes. When he came in he never said anything about accepting me as his pupil or not. He began straight away to give me a lesson. I played 'Lison Dormait' to him, and also read some music, and he was very discontented with me, and said I played as if I were eighty years old. I was to play much quicker. And, secondly, he said I did not play in time at all. He gets terribly excited, and if he thinks you made a fault, and finds afterwards that he himself is wrong, he corrects the fingering or something else which is really perfectly right. What shall I do if I cannot play it next time right? I have got to practise every morning the Stamaty and scales for two hours, and to come to him again on Saturday at half-past eight. Madame Berg said she thought it was too early, but he said I could not come at any other time, and simply drove us out of the room. It rained all the afternoon, so Madge and I played shopping. I did as if I had married a negro, and after having a

little tour I had a baby called Topsy, and now I am settling down in Paris, and buying everything necessary for a household. Madge likes it better than anything else, I think. In the evening, after dinner, father read us Shakespeare's 'All's Well that Ends Well,' while we made a trousseau for Topsy, because Madge says she shall be married to-morrow. Madge has got a sailor doll, and says that Topsy shall marry him. Madge is rather vexed about my lessons; and says that she wants some, too. She bought a fiddle at a toy shop while she was out walking with Nanna this afternoon, and says she is going to learn it all by herself, as she cannot have lessons. She says she will come out as a concert player, too, and earn her own living, and have a country house in the summer, and a winter house in Chichester, and that none of us shall ever come to see her, because we won't let her have music lessons.

February 15th.—Madame Vidal came very early this morning, while I was practising, and asked me all about my lessons. I told her everything, and was perfectly polite; but soon she asked me what was the matter. Of course I would not tell her—at least I didn't

mean to—but she soon found out, and tried to explain to me that it was only dressing up, like everybody does in plays. I said I wished she wouldn't act in plays where they dressed so horridly, and she said that 'Castilia' was only played very seldom, and we were soon friends again. Father came in, and we all had breakfast together, although Madame Vidal said she had already had one breakfast. She always amuses us when she is here. In the afternoon she took me shopping, and I went to tea at her house.

February 17th.—When we got to Monsieur Conté's house at half-past eight this morning he sent a message to us that he was busy with some composition, and that we were to come back at ten. When he came in, Madame Berg said she really must remonstrate a little about the change of hours, but he took no notice of her at all, and I played 'Lison Dormait' through again. He was in the most charming humour, and said of course the adagio was very difficult, but that I had evidently practised thoroughly, and on the whole he was very well satisfied. I was to come again on Wednesday, and by that time I was to know the whole of it by heart perfectly. After the lesson he talked to me

most amiably, and I said that I had seen 'Castilia,' and that the overture and the prelude to the second act were especially beautiful. He said that my taste was very good, as these were the best pieces of writing in the Opera; but when I said that I thought the first act a little dull, he got very angry and said, "What you don't know about music, mademoiselle, would fill the biggest book in the Bibliothèque Nationale." Madame Berg was rather angry, but of course all geniuses are like that. I am always rather angry myself whenever anyone finds fault with my playing, even when they are quite right. In the evening father took us to see the 'Juif Polonais' at a theatre called the Comédie Française. I said I wouldn't go at first, but he persuaded me to come. It was a very exciting piece, and everything was quite nice. Nobody danced or dressed up at all.

February 18*th*.—I wanted to stay longer in bed this morning, but I thought what would I do later on when, perhaps, I should have to play in public every evening. I practised 'Lison Dormait' all morning, and after déjeûner till nearly four o'clock, when all of a sudden my head got hotter and hotter, and I could feel nothing more at all. At

first I sat in a chair, and asked Madame Berg to play some soft pieces to me, but that was no good. Madame Vidal came in, and in a few minutes she took me away and put me to bed. She sat by my side and talked to me very quietly. Her voice is just like a fountain playing, and I went to sleep and slept till late in the evening. When I woke up she came back and sat with me, and brought me some nice little things to eat for dinner, and read me all my favourite pieces out of the 'Imitation.'

February 23rd.—We got a telegram from Monsieur Conté this morning asking us to come at two instead of four. Naturally we went, but when we arrived he said that he had forgotten a lesson which was to be given between two and three, and would we come back at three. When we came back he was quietly continuing his lesson. Madame Berg would not stand this, and leaving a message to be given by his servant, we came away. In the evening we had a note from Monsieur Conté asking us to come on Friday at two. He began like this: "Je suis très vexé que ma servante vous a laissé partir," as if his servant could lock us in. It is ridiculous. I went shopping with Madame Vidal again,

and she bought me a new corset, and some shoes, and a new hat. Madame Berg's taste is rather queer. She said I might have the new corset if I held myself very straight. In the evening we all dined out at a restaurant called Paillard's. Uncle Hugh came, and who should we see there but Captain Hetherington, with Miss Benson, whom he has just married, so she is now Mrs. Hetherington. They were glad to see us, and we all dined together. Madame Vidal told me some very amusing stories. Captain Hetherington wanted to sit by her, but she said that was my place.

February 24th.—The Hetheringtons came to see us this afternoon. I played to them a little, and they both admired me very much. They said it was astonishing. Madame Vidal came and took me to my lesson. Monsieur Conté was very nice, and joked a good deal. He noticed I had a new corset, and remarked if it was a pretty one he would like to see it. Madame Vidal was very angry. I have to learn for next week a concerto in B flat major, by Dussek, and some more 'Etudes de Vélocité.' He says he finds me a little more advanced than he really had thought.

March 5th.— When I get into bed at night, whatever time it is, Madge always wakes up

and says: "Are you warm enough?" If I don't answer immediately, a quarrel is certain to arise in the morning, and then we fight like cats and dogs. I have got a cough, and Madame Berg has been giving me some morphine pills, which always stop it. Madame Vidal was very angry when she came this afternoon, and threw them away, and I told Madame Berg, and she said the horridest things about her, but I did not know what she was talking about, and I only cried a little. Madame Vidal took me to my lesson, and I played the 'Mouvement Perpétuel,' by Weber. Monsieur Conté said it was all wrong, and was very angry, and made me cry. Madame Vidal said to him that we were not going to stand many more scenes of this description, and that she would have me taken somewhere else, and that I was the only pupil he had whose playing was worth two sous. He calmed down at last, and said, "Certainly she is a little miracle. I would not lose her for anything." And then we went home quite happy. I have finished 'John Halifax.' The hero and heroine both die the same day and hour. I have begun 'Sans Famille,' by Hector Malot.

March 15*th.*—Very wet day. We want rain, but this world is always uncontent. If it rains their clothes get spoilt; in hot weather the sun is too strong. Mr. and Mrs. Lovegrove came to lunch to-day. They were frightfully rude, staring at Madame Vidal as if they had never seen a French person before. The Duc de Lille came in, but we all talked English. The Lovegroves do not know any French. When Mr. Lovegrove tried to talk to the Duke I got so red with trying not to laugh that father thought I was choking. I played afterwards the 'Mouvement Perpetuel' and the 'Bee Song,' and Mrs. Lovegrove was so very funny. She said patronisingly: "Why, you play as well as Sophie, who is nearly twice as old as you are." I suppose she thinks that music grows up in you like your legs and arms. If so, Methuselah must have been the greatest musician in the world. I made that joke myself. We are all goin to lunch at Paillard's to-morrow.

March 30*th.*—We had a letter this morning from Monsieur Conté, asking if I might play at the concours of his pupils next week. It is so strange to get a letter asking if I may do something, instead of telling me to, that we are quite puzzled, and think he must be

ill. Father took me this afternoon to the Salon—an exhibition of pictures. It was perfectly hateful. I do not know how people can go to such hateful places. I was so miserable that I cried a little, and then I suddenly saw Madame Vidal. She came to us, and father said, "What on earth's the matter?" but she did not say anything. She laughed a little, and put her hand over my eyes, and took me away, and we went to tea at Columbin's. She says she will take me to the Nouveau Cirque again to-morrow night. I will not go to a single other place in this hateful town unless she says I may go and she comes too.

IV.

HÔTEL LAFOND, PARIS.

MY DARLING EDIE

Thank you so much for your letter. I do hope baby is better. Madge says she hopes so too, and that she liked your letter so much, and that she would write to you herself, but she has got to write to Cousin George, who has sent her a Pound. She writes now without anyone guiding her hand,

and won't let anyone read her letters, so I don't expect you will be able to read much of it when it comes. She wants a watch, and says she is going to have an extra birthday next week, when she will be six and a-half. Usually I should not have very much to write to you this time, because we have seen nearly everything in Paris, and I have told you all about it; but, as it happens, there is a most interesting piece of news. Father is going to marry Madame Vidal. He came and told me about it before any body, except grandfather, before Uncle Hugh or anybody. He didn't say to me, "You are going to have a new mother," like the fathers do in all the books; he told me just simply, like he would tell anyone else. I was so glad he didn't say that. I have told you a good lot about Madame Vidal, but now I must tell you a lot more. In the first place, she is very beautiful, much more beautiful than anybody I ever saw, so she must, of course, be more beautiful than anybody you ever saw, because, of course, I have travelled more. I hope you don't mind my saying that. I dare say you will travel quite as much some day. She has been married before. I think it is most

proper for a man who has been married before to marry a woman who has been married before, else it would be a disadvantage for one of them. She has not got any children, but I do not know whether she will have any. I do hope so, because it is so nice to undress and bath them, and then your baby would have some one to play with. She acts in a theatre now, because she was quite poor, and I daresay some silly people will think from that that she is not as good as they are; but she is, and nobody had better say she isn't, before me. When she danced at the Opera, and I told you about her skirts being short, of course you must remember that people there have to dress up. Father calls her Yvonne, and she says I may call her that, or anything I like. I don't know yet what I shall call her. If she has any babies, they would be my "half-brothers," which is just the same, really, as being brothers, so it would seem rather funny to call them by their Christian names, and her too; but I may do just as I like; father says so too. Madge says she supposes she will have to spend all her pound in giving them wedding presents. She says she will be a bridesmaid, and have a blue

frock, and the big imitation diamond locket which is in the jeweller's window at Chichester; and that she will have white ventilated stockings. She always calls her embroidered stockings with the little holes in them, ventilated stockings, but I do not expect they will have any bridesmaids. They are going to be married at the beginning of May. Grandfather said a lot of horrid things about it, and is constantly saying sarcastic things, and making me low bows in the way that I hate. He said to me yesterday, "You who know the world so well, Helen, and can read all the characters in it at a glance, as you can one of your Chopin morceaux" (but he was not talking sarcastically then, because he has said that to me several times before, and, of course, I have seen a great deal of the world) "tell me your candid opinion of Yvonne Vidal." I said to him the sentence which I read to you out of that book, and which we thought was so pretty: "Le monde n'est jamais divisé pour moi qu'en deux régions, celle où elle est, et celle où elle n'est pas." He said, "Very pretty, upon my soul," and he said I was quite right to be loyal. I do wish you could come here to the wedding. We are not going to

Cannes now. Yvonne says that I am to send you her love, and say that she wants to see you very much. Please give my love to Mrs. Eyre. Madge would send hers, but she has gone out to look for a wedding present for father. She says all her life and money are spent in looking for wedding and birthday presents for people. Good-bye, dearest Edie.

Your loving

HELEN ESTCOURT-DARCY.

Chapter XII.

THE OLDEST TALE IN THE WORLD.

THE Dean Park School for Girls was walking home after an hour's run on the Westcliffe sands, the procession being headed by two little maidens who were discussing what they should do with some captured crabs, and concluded by a sixteen-year-old lady, a child of eleven, and a German governess who was preaching to the former about the future of women. The crab owners were full of revengeful schemes; yesterday a paddling party had been harried and reduced to tears by savagely biting crabs, and to-day these captives should pay the price—they should be kept in a bucket for a week, said a small child firmly, "to calm down their proudness." At the other end of the procession Fraulein was pouring into doubtfully sympathetic ears a tirade against domestic life. "You have read with me," she was saying excitedly, "the passage in the Phaedrus where 'the souls in their pilgrimage pass out and stand upon the

back of the sky' and 'behold the things that are beyond the sky, and by the vision of truth are fed and fare well.' That vision of perfect knowledge! What sacrifice is it not worth! Life is so interesting at worst; what it must be when you have found that priceless pearl of philosophy and tasted its pure pleasure! Home—love—children—what are they worth? What in truth are their pleasures? Phantoms of true pleasure, so coloured by mere juxtaposition to pain that they seem real! As well might one live to hit balls about with bats like these poor little boys. . . ."

"Fraulein"—the elder girl interrupted the lecture with a little petitioning smile—"may Nancy come and walk on your other side? She—she likes to look at the cricket."

Near to Dean Park School was Dr. Elliott's preparatory school for small boys, whose playground ran by a certain piece of road which the other children must pass daily. A brother and sister sometimes came to the two schools, and were allowed to exchange nods and smiles; more rarely some feather-brained young maiden would strike up a giggling, note-exchanging acquaintance with one of the boys; but the children at both

schools were mostly nice-minded little persons, indifferent to friendships which would not be recognised by the authorities. Nevertheless, all the girls at Dean Park knew about Nancy Bellingham's friendship with the red-haired freckled boy at Dr. Elliott's, and did their best to aid it.

A very shy, silent little person, whose conversation in general company rarely exceeded three sentences of half a dozen words each, Nancy crept through her school life circled by the protecting adoration of everybody in it. When, in passing the football ground, she had looked steadily at the red-haired boy every day during two winter terms, and the boy noticed it, and came within smiling distance of the railings, and once or twice looked back at her with a shy smile, two girls had teased Nancy about it. But Nancy only stared straight before her, with faintly reddening cheeks and slightly quivering lips and a little cloud of tears coming at last over her blue eyes; and then for three days afterwards she would not walk next to the railings as she passed the football field. Only when Nellie Lane, the chief offender, had come to her bedside one night and laid her round cheek on the pillow by

Miss Nancy's, and whispered a full and abject apology, did the lady agree to take her wonted place in the "crocodile" during its afternoon promenade. After which the offender (who was the school humorist) made further reparation by pouring scarifying wit over everybody who had repeated or even heard her jokes about the red-haired boy. "What were you laughing at?" she asked coldly. "I hope I didn't make a joke which *you* could understand?" Whence ensued tears and the pulling of hair.

In the summer term occurred a thrilling incident. Cricket was in full swing at the hour when the Dean House children walked past the boys' playing-field, and one day the red-haired boy was discovered fielding quite close to the railings. Unanimously and without a word the whole school slowed down their pace to the barest movement; the boy's eyes looked eagerly down the procession till they found Nancy; then they dropped to his boots, and he turned away with elaborate unconcern. But next afternoon he was again close to the railings, this time awaiting his innings, but with eyes not wholly regardless of the Dean Park gates; though it was only this morning that my

young gentleman, studying Tacitus on his way to the Eton Army class and Sandhurst, had read out with ostentatious scorn the tale of Galba's détour from his marching army to lay the famous flowers on Poppaea's grave: "Ne tum quidem veterum immemor amorum." Again the procession slowed down, and this time the two children's shy eyes and reddening cheeks were within a yard of one another. It flurried the red-haired boy so much that he felt as desperate as he was wont to feel at Christmas parties when girls asked him to dance with them and something had to be said or done in reply. On the whole, at this moment words seemed the best relief for the tension, so he tore a button half off his cricket shirt, and said hurriedly:—

"My name's Hugh Carr."

For two afternoons after this the fielding arrangements of the cricket ground went wrong, but next day Mr. Carr was near the railings. He looked nervous, but apparently expected some information in return for his own, for he glanced inquiringly at Nancy as she passed, and his small freckled face looked after her in surprised disappointment when she went by in silence, with only a very small frightened smile at him. The silence

grievously displeased Nellie Lane too, who dared not remonstrate, but walked along meditating action of her own. As they came back the red-haired boy suddenly appeared walking mournfully by himself near the railings, having just completed an unsuccessful innings ; at all risks something must be saved from the wreck of this situation, and Nellie (like the cabman who drove three ladies into the river and stood on a bridge crying "Save my horse") had a fine power of rapidly surveying and doing the best in a critical situation. She changed places with Nancy now, and, deciding that "Bellingham" was too long a surname to be pronounced in these hurried moments, she leant towards Hugh Carr and whispered briefly :

"Hers is Nancy."

The rest of the summer term and the first three weeks of the next passed on without more words, the children meeting every day in contented silence. They thought very little of each other before or afterwards, and talked of one another not at all ; the meetings were but a little continuous line of white sunlight running silently through their lives. And then one winter day the line broke and the

sunlight vanished. No red-haired boy was playing football in the field as the Dean Park School went by. When they came back he was not there; next afternoon he was not there. Wonder and fear about him intruded themselves now into Nancy's lesson time; she dressed for her afternoon walk with frightened hope: she came back from it each day with lips trembling speechlessly, and eyes turned back longingly for a last look. But there was only a grey field, with some other boys playing football, and beyond them the sun setting over the great darkling cliffs and purple sea. Beside her every day Nellie walked, holding one hand tightly, and at night whispering, "He'll soon come back." Nancy smiled now and then at the words, being mostly happier at night, when she might think undisturbed, and sometimes cry a little, held protectingly by the quiet, comfortable darkness which tells no tales and is surprised at nothing. Once only Nellie had heard a sob, and had come to the bedside with attempts at consolation. Four empty weeks had gone by, and she could only counsel patience. The rest of the school looked on in sympathetic but helpless silence. A great philosopher—I think it was myself—has discovered that a

person in adversity hates above all things to "see faces"—i.e., to see unsympathetic eyes looking at him with cold, dispassionate, philosophic curiosity. No indifferent eyes studied Miss Nancy, nor was any philosophy offered to her. Fraulein's teaching would take no root in Dean Park yet awhile.

It was an afternoon in late November, the sun shining down still warmly, and a clear, clean west wind scattering the scent of ozone, when the school procession, coming in sight of the football field, broke into a long excited murmur of delight. The red-haired boy, dressed in a multiplicity of coats, was walking up and down by the railings, eyeing alternately the footballers and the entrance to Dean Park. A very small, white, pinched face, from which all freckles had fled, surmounted the overcoats, like a pale Tasmanian apple on the top of a tub; but it flushed redly as the procession came on, and two glowing brown eyes peered forward requiring Nancy. With one consent the girls looked expectantly at Nellie Lane, mutely praying her to rise to the occasion; and accordingly, when the procession was alongside of the little lad, Miss Nellie, though her stocking-suspenders were of the newest and firmest, was obliged to stop

and pull up her stockings. But the two children were past speech. They could but look at one another across the railings with grateful, insatiable eyes, and it was only as Nancy moved on again that the boy found his tongue, and murmured briefly :

" Had measles."

As usual, Nellie was obliged to make the reply, and she had to wait, for when the girls came back from their walk the invalid had gone in ; but the sun was out again the next day, and the red-haired boy was out too, and Nellie leant across as she passed and whispered an answer to him :

" Nancy's so thankfully glad."

The answer, as Nellie reflected afterwards, was rather ambiguous, but the two children seemed satisfied with it.

Chapter XIII.

THE GREATEST OF WRITERS.

I WAS presented in the spring of 1901 with a book called 'Concerning Children,' written by Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman; an assertive, freedom-breathing and desperately modern work; the Koran, I am told, of the American nursery. Newspaper notices quoted in the volume called its theories about children "daringly original," "startling," and applied similar not unfamiliar adjectives. I glanced down the quotations with a little smile, for the book (which is, in fact, an interesting and clever bit of work, putting forward with passionate vigour the rights of youth, and catching and reproducing with some skill the atmosphere of freedom, love, courtesy and care in which it should live) is in its best parts a mere apotheosis by America of the life-work of a far greater and more beloved child-friend, whose grave in Otterbourne churchyard was just then being lined with moss and spring flowers.

Charlotte Yonge's biography, without the catalogue of her books, could with difficulty be extended over two pages of the present volume. She was born in 1823, her life being thus nearly contemporary with that of the late Queen Victoria, and she died at Elderfield, a house in Otterbourne village, which is separated by the length of a garden from the house where she was born. She spent all her early years under the influence of Keble, the beginnings of many schemes and stories being talked over in Hursley vicarage; all her books down to the last page of 'Modern Broods' show his influence; and her grave now is at the foot of Keble's memorial cross. The church and schools here were designed by Miss Yonge's father and built when she herself was fifteen. In the school she taught for nearly sixty years, and some of the scholars whom she was teaching a few weeks before her death were the children and grandchildren of her former pupils. The new church at Otterbourne was throughout her life one of her greatest points of interest; she contributed from time to time to its decoration, came untiringly to its daily services, and passed very few Sundays out of sound of its bells, which

were ringing for Evensong on the Passion Sunday when she died. There came once to Elderfield an American journalist, who had "written up" Stratford-on-Avon and Shakespeare, Stoke Pogis and Gray, Hursley and Keble, and proposed to perform the same task for Miss Yonge and Otterbourne. I wonder what on earth he found to say? Miss Yonge herself, according to a popular story, once wrote a four-page letter to a visitor merely to ask if she had dropped a button off her glove, and perhaps American talent was not behindhand.

Miss Yonge's position among those women of the last century who have influenced its life and thought, is not easy to define precisely. I would not willingly overestimate it, nor too straitly follow the French proverb which bids us put only wreaths on open graves; so I hesitate a little, fearing to be accused of exaggeration, if I place her second among such women-workers to the late Queen Victoria. Once I should have stated such a belief without hesitation, feeling entirely convinced that a woman who has dominated ten impressionable years in the lives of tens of thousands of girls, and not a few young men, has been a

great power, and feeling placidly content with the quantity and quality of men and women whom I have heard express a similar view. But bewilderment fell upon me one morning after her death when I took up a dozen papers and read one contemptuous criticism after another on work which two generations of English folk have loved and reverenced since they could spell. It was not some witless young journalist trying to be smart according to his unhappy lights ; it was not some Nonconformist or non-Christian critic repaying disapprobation with ridicule, whose comments puzzled me. The vexation of the latter critic was perfectly comprehensible and pardonable, for Miss Yonge understood very little of his ideas, and disliked extremely all that she did understand. Nonconformists were the naughty children of her schoolroom-party, vexatious though reclaimable, while professed non-believers could only be written of in a frightened whisper. The comments of the former class of critic are equally comprehensible, for he regards statesmen, ecclesiastics and artists as great leaders when they write, or cause to be written, monthly accounts of their houses, dresses, ties, pens,

dogs, cats, amusements, forthcoming pictures, first books and opinions on War Office reform; and a person who does not do this is, to the critic in question, simply an old-fashioned nonentity, a "writer for the Parish Library," as one of these youths sweetly remarked about Miss Yonge. Another of them did indeed graciously allow that "there is something in her books besides sanctified twaddle"; but I gather in general from this criticism that the Lower Fifth Form of the provincial Grammar School does not admire Miss Yonge's life work.

I am bewildered, however, by the verdict of certain other critics whose judgment cannot lightly be put aside, and who believe that her work is now old-fashioned, and its interest and influence a thing of the past. "There probably never was a trained critic," says one such writer, "who ranked Miss Yonge's work very high, or derived acute pleasure from its perusal." An older era of literature has passed away with her, we are told, and a fresh generation has arisen which knows little of her books. "The kind of incidents which she thought attractive and interesting," says a very kindly critic, "the gentler and more affectionate psychological

analysis to which she was wedded, make her seem old-fashioned to those who have been trained in the work of George Egerton, Iota, and Sarah Grand." With this is coupled some censure on her lack of humour, prolixity, and historical inaccuracy.

Who are Miss Yonge's readers, and what are her own intentions with regard to them? I should range the readers between the ages of eight and eighteen (presuming that the 'Little Duke' is comprehensible by the former, and 'Heartsease' and 'Unknown to History' still acceptable to the latter), and Miss Yonge wrote for them believing, as she said herself, that she would have to give an account at last to their Maker for every word she had written. Now, these are ages when exact accuracy of historical detail (so far as such a thing is possible at all, which is not very far: "Thank goodness," said a companion of mine in the History School at Oxford, who got a brilliant class with eight months' reading, "history is an inexact science, and my imagination is as good as most men's"), such accuracy, I repeat, matters far less than a sound appreciation of general life and atmosphere. A very clever young lecturer in history told

me once that Miss Yonge's 'Cameos' of history are of the greatest use to her in teaching. "I do not go to them for facts," she told me, "but for colour, and a compound of Stubbs and Cameos in my brain produces rather a serviceable lecture." In an historical novel it is surely a well-recognised rule that the story comes first; if you over-load it with dates, explanations, theories and facts, your laudable work will die young, as it deserves to die. Similarly with jokes, which the average child detests in a story;—they are passed over with impatience or blank uncomprehension, and an author who is always "funning," as the small folk call it, would simply be put aside. A sense of humour Miss Yonge certainly had, but a cascade of jokes would have alienated half her young readers. At that age we want a long, full, clear narrative, telling very simply of a simple, familiar life —a life where the same motives which yesterday prompted the young reader to smack her sister, or rebel against the governess, are to-day prompting the heroine of this book to do the same thing. Charlotte Yonge's power of describing, in interesting fashion and great detail, this family life, and

telling a charming story about it, is simply unrivalled and unapproached by any author I know in England or France.

Madame de Ségur, to whom I should assign second place in this art of describing family life, has no grasp of her story. Charming incidents succeed one another in 'Les Vacances' and 'Les Malheurs de Sophie'; the little people's chatter and games and woes are photographed one by one as correctly as the crowd in a biograph-picture; jokes and *double entendre* are rigorously excluded, and philosophical reflections are written (metaphorically) in words of one syllable, but Madame de Ségur has absolutely no idea of writing a consistent, well-knit dramatic story.

In historical romance no one would deny, I suppose, that Miss Yonge's power of re-creating the atmosphere of by-gone centuries in a few words is extraordinarily vivid; the authors of 'Kenilworth' and 'Esmond' were not greater artists in this respect than the authoress of the 'Caged Lion' or the 'Dove in the Eagle's Nest,' and I doubt whether Scott himself ranged over a wider field of history. The 'Patriots of Palestine' (to mention a few stories which

occur readily to one's mind) begins in the year 174 B.C.; the 'Little Duke' takes us into the tenth century; the 'Caged Lion' and the 'Penniless Princesses' are pictures of the fourteenth century; the 'Dove in the Eagle's Nest,' of Germany, under Maximilian; the 'Prince and the Page,' of the last Crusade; while the 'History of France,' the 'Story of the Christians and Moors in Spain,' and the nine volumes of 'Cameos from English History,' are not light tasks or open to any very serious accusation of inaccuracy. Miss Yonge, in fact, cared a great deal about truth, and some very incisive remarks were written to me once about a fairy-book in which I had made some blundering reference to the battle of Agincourt. I remember on another occasion I was having tea with her, and fell into conversation with another guest about some point connected with the growth of pineapples. The lady in question "wondered" whether they grew in a certain way, and I "believed" they grew best in a certain other way. At the end of a minute or two Miss Yonge's voice broke into the discussion with a quiet, "Let us now *find out*;" and we were soon provided with a horticultural book which settled the question.

Truly, when you have finished or even embarked on a course of literature which comprises the 'Yellow Aster' and the 'Beth Book,' Miss Yonge's psychology does seem a little tame, though I hold a private opinion that if two or three of her stories had not been written by a lady whose work was already labelled "for children only," they would have been greeted with general delight. How many a score of writers have had cause to sympathise with Voltaire's wrathful cry to the audience who yawned over one of his adaptations of Greek tragedy, "Applaudissez donc, imbéciles! C'est de Sophocle!" But again, I ask, who are the readers chosen by Miss Yonge? I know large numbers of them rather well, and I really doubt very strongly whether Madame Sarah Grand would interest them. I have not the slightest desire to preach against the modern novels of London and Paris. Adultery and seduction, sermons on the equality of the sexes, and pages of epigrams mostly quite honestly come by—(for, after all, an epigram only requires pen, ink, paper and an idea, of which the first three may be one's own)—all these command large and interested audiences, and I say why not? But the editor of a popular

and by no means "goody" magazine once returned a doubtful story to a popular writer with the comment that he preferred interesting stories "with a true gospel tone," and an immense majority of readers, young and old, agree with this taste.

Is Miss Yonge interesting? Of course, when Laura puts on a bonnet and shawl, instead of a golf cape and sailor hat, to go out and meet Philip, the young reader of the 'Heir of Redclyffe' fidgets for a moment; and Amy's tears—(a famous critic has calculated that she cries 369 times in the course of the story, a number which is only exceeded by the lachrymose Ellen Montgomery in the 'Wide Wide World')—are a tiresome part of that rather morbid work, which, personally, I like the least of all Miss Yonge's stories. But Sir F. Palgrave tells a story of how he and Tennyson were once travelling in Cornwall, and occupied the same bedroom in an inn. For hours during the day-time Tennyson had been reading the 'Young Stepmother,' and in bed he went on reading it. Suddenly he cried out, "I see daylight now; he is going to be confirmed!" and, well satisfied, he put out the candle and went to sleep. Dr. Whewell, the well-known Master of

Trinity, described the 'Clever Woman of the Family' as the best novel in the English language; and Dr. Randall Davidson once said that, though it was thirty years since he had read the 'Little Duke,' he remembered perfectly every detail of the story. The influence exercised by the 'Heir of Redclyffe' on William Morris, Burne-Jones, and some of their friends at Oxford, has been quoted so frequently from Morris's biography that it need not be dwelt on here. A thousand grown-up folk, yesterday, to-day, and for years to come, have gone and will go to Charlotte Yonge's book for pure love of studying such serene faith and high ideals as live in them. Most of us to-day know rather intimately what it means to be tired in mind and soul and body—deadly tired, so that movement is hardly possible and quiet hardly tolerable—so that the thought of theatres and dinner-parties is horrible, and the idea of solitude is worse; when a man who sympathises with us would rouse us to a frenzied denial of any malady, and a man who made a joke or told a funny story in our presence would endanger his life. It is in these moods that literature like the 'Daisy Chain,' is a necessity, and I sympathise with

an admirer of Miss Yonge who has worn out two copies of 'Pillars of the House,' to which she always resorts when tired or not well. It is not only that its story can distract attention; a hundred books can do that, and your tortured nerves would not give a penny for such distraction. A soul in torment does not want to have a string of epigrams dangled and danced before its sick eyes; it wants medicine; the quiet pure narrative of men and women who are living lives with something in them besides fret and hurry and money-making, the gentle tonic of a well-described spiritual conflict fought on some narrow Christian field, with the simplest alternatives, and victory assured beforehand to the right side; with, above all, a well-knit story to which such victory will make a clear difference. A theological tract bound up as a novel will not answer the same purpose. One of the points about Miss Yonge's books which apparently irritates many readers is that she quietly takes for granted the truth of her own theological views; but, as the 'Spectator' remarked in an able article about Miss Yonge's work: "In this country and America a story, if it has any strength of

its own, gains instead of losing in popularity from a religious flavour. No novel with power in it will now fail because it is intended to inculcate a particular belief, and no character will be despised because it is the product mainly of a special creed."

It is not, however, as a nerve-doctor, an historian or a rival of Madame Sarah Grand that Miss Yonge finally appeals to our judgment, but as a writer of stories for young folk. Do children to-day read her books? Is she still a living active influence among them? I feel myself on surer ground in answering these questions. About historical accuracy, theology, nerves and literary style I speak (or ought to speak) in diffident tones; but the other is a matter of fact or the contrary, and from wide, real, personal knowledge I can assert that the modern child does read Miss Yonge's books—reads them again and again, reads three, four, half-a-dozen of them straight on end, chooses them for prizes, asks friends to buy them for him or her, quotes them consciously and unconsciously, and alters habits and speech according to some hero or heroine in them. I am sorry to disagree so positively with far abler critics of literary work, who call

Miss Yonge out of date and unknown to the rising generation; but the critics are absolutely wrong. A little lady of my acquaintance, one among a score of such devotees, lately read 'The Daisy Chain,' finished it, put it away and looked for another book. Not immediately finding anything to her taste she began 'The Daisy Chain' again and read it straight through once more. As she was bringing it down to the library after this she opened the volume, caught sight of a description whose connection with the story she had forgotten, and stopped to find out to what it referred. The temptation was irresistible, and she took the book back and read it through again for the third time. Another small person, somewhat younger, who was allowed a fairly free choice of books, can hardly be made to read or listen to any stories except a selection of Miss Yonge's and two of Mrs. Ewing's. New books are nearly always greeted half-way through with: "Oh, it is so dull! Do read me 'The Little Duke' again!" In an extremely modern school, patronised by some small friends of mine, and where the children range in age from twelve to eighteen, I caused an enquiry to be held recently about

the popularity of story-writers. Every one had read some of Miss Yonge's books. Tastes differed about all of them, but on the whole 'The Heir of Redclyffe' was the least popular and 'Unknown to History' the most popular. 'The Stokesley Secret' was praised by a large chorus, because "the children are so natural." Comparisons were made between Mr. Stanley Weyman's and Miss Yonge's historical novels, and a girl said: "I like Miss Yonge's *much* the best; she makes the history seem so real, as well as the other part, so that they are much more interesting;" thereby obviously summing up her companions' opinion. I could repeat a hundred of such stories. In London and country houses kind hostesses often indulge my preference for having breakfast in the schoolroom, tea in the nursery, and a child companion on each side of me at lunch; our conversation, like that of our elders, ranges over art, literature, games, scandal, money-spending, and parties, and I should be sorry to have to bear a part in it without an intimate knowledge of Miss Yonge's story books. If this love of her work has gone on for half-a-century; the sermons preached in

these seventy volumes, by the noble and pure young lives therein described, being sent far and wide over the English empire and half Europe and America besides, am I wrong in claiming for their authoress immense power in the past and present, and long years of life to come? The quiet faith and the note of high triumph which rings through these histories of endurance and struggle are qualities which make books live on. A thousand literary vivisectionists, a hundred or two of whom might disappear any day without any one being much the wiser or the worse, are at hand to pick to pieces our souls, and show us where the machinery goes wrong, and why; but the few torch-bearers who show us the way to victory always, and whose work leads young enthusiasms, and shapes young ambitions and dreams, cannot be allowed to die. In truth they do not die. The face and voice which a few lucky mortals knew and loved pass out of sight for a time, but round and above their empty places is "a light shining in darkness," and an echo of the voice to which children, and even some of their elders, were well content to listen when it said, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

CHAPTER XIV.

STORIES TOLD BY CHILDREN.

The following stories are all "origonel," as one writer describes her own.

Originality is so easily blotted out from a story that I have not interfered with these in any respect—not even to regulate punctuation or spelling, which by the way are identical with those of the familiar Board School essay. Children of all classes spell alike at this age, and have an equally noble disregard for stops.

The authoress of the first story is the ten-year-old Lady Beaumont, that of the second her younger sister, the Hon. Ivy Stapleton, that of the third Miss M. Lumley, grand-daughter of Mrs. John Wood, and that of the fourth Miss Phyllis Terry, the eleven-year-old daughter of Mr. F. Terry and Miss Julia Neilson (Mrs. F. Terry).

THE CIRCUS CHILD.

I am 10 years old, so I thought I would beagen a story of my life.

My name is Mona, my brother jack is 12. we have a governess called Miss Trent we simply hate her she is offly fat, one day she eat a hole plum tart and the next day she was ill so we escaped Lessons that day, in

the morning jack said lets have a game of Hiden seek, in the middle miss Trent sent a message to tell us that we werent to play such a noisy game as it kept her awake. In a few minnets we crept in to see if she was asleep, then we took the key out of the lock and locked her in, soon after we herd her bell ring, we hid our selfs behinde a door to see what would happen. Then Mary the maid came up to see what she wanted she could not get in and was furis, so then we thought it was time to go for a picnic so we crept down into the Scurly and got some cold pheasent and bread and butter and put it into a baxet, then we walked about two miles and at the corner of the road we saw some gpyses and they said "come a long and we will show you a lovely Kiten."

We thought it was realy a kiten and folled, but when we got thier she took hold of us and took us into a sort of tent where some women took off our clothes and put on some dirty ones, we cried and cried, then we camped at a town 10 miles off called Selby, and we were never alloed to go out alone, then I founde that I was to be made to ackt in the cirques and jack was to be made to take care of the poor little ponys.

I was very glade that he was to take care of them, beaucause he would be kind to the poor little things, as they looked so wretched. My part was not so easy as I had to walk on rope and ride the pony bare backs, they whaked us if we did things badly.

One day they told me to go in the ring I was frigted at first but I did it better and better. One day I was in the ring when I saw Mother, I called out "Mother, mother, dont you know me! I am Mona" I rushed to her and I fainted in her arms, I was very pleased to be at home again I can tell you.

Written by me BEAUMONT.

A STORY OF HUNTING.

This is a story about myself, I am called Betty, do you want to know what I am like?

I am 9 years old, big blue eyes my nose from year to year and red cheeks. I went out hunting one day, on my pony "Brandy," the hounds met at our house, so my pony was very fresh; a lot of people came and had lunch, and I gave them cakes and biscuits, they ate such a lot, then the master drew a little gorse in the park, then I saw a fox and

called out taly-ho! taly-ho! The hounds would not come, but at last they did so, then the hunts-man came over and asked me, how he could get over the other side of the great big drane, at the end of our park, I said "come along with me, and I will show you the way," I whiped up my pony galoped all I knew how and called out, "go over this bridge, and there you are," and then all the people laughed at me showing the hunts-men the way.

Then there was another drane to get over and 5 people got into it, and the horses swam about, a poor girl wet thro her face all scratched with her hat hanging off her head, asked me, if she could come in and get on some clean clothes, she did look so funny, and the men were so cross, trying to get there horses out of the drane, one poor grey horse broke its back or neck, being puled out, and I went and showed her the way home, and then I galaped off and found the hounds again, then I saw a little fox hiding under the hedge the huntsman came up and asked me if I had seen the fox, I said no (a horid story but I felt sory for the fox) the hounds smelt the fox and caughted him, I could have cried I was so sory, the hunts-

man puled the hounds away, caught hold of the dead fox, one of the whips took off the head and brush and the master said "this is for you" and gave me the brush.

I was so pleased, the hounds made such a noise; an old man came up to me and said that I had a nice pony and some others made stupid old jokes about its name and asked where was the "soda." I must tell you my pony Brandy is a chestnut, he is 9 years old, and over 13 hands, he looks like a hunter and has a nice long tail.

Written by Ivy Stapleton.

A FIRE.

It was a dull night in November about eleven o'clock.

Two boys of about ten and eleven lay awake in bed, they had been telling each other adventursome stories of daring deeds, and now they lay awake thinking of all the awful things that happened in their stories of murders, fires, midnight fights and desperate things. Presently the youngest whose name was Dickie said to his elder brother Edward "I say I am sure I can see a flame downstairs." "Nonsense" retorted his brother.

A few minutes had passed when Dickie said "Oh Edward I am sure I saw a flame shute up from downstairs, I am so frightened."

Dick got out of bed and went to the window and looking out leaned over and looked down to the bottom of the house. "Oh Edward" exclaimed Dickie "there is a bright light in the kitchen and the servants came up to bed a long time ago, I heard them." At this Edward sprang out of bed and opening the window he looked down and saw the flames and upset the candle and bringing his head in he told his brother to wait and he rushed into his father's room and in a few breathless words explained what he and his brother had seen, and with an alarmed look in his eyes he went outside the room with his father and they saw the bright flames had already reached the hall.

They had just got their mother and father down when little Dicky went into the house again, evidently to fetch something the father called to him and the mother turned deadly white and did not dare to look, for she was afraid she would never see him again, and indeed she was right, for when the fireman had got there he found little Dickie lying dead, he was smothered, a little box was in

his hand, the fireman took the box to his father and mother and his brother recognized it to be a present that a dead boy had given him and asked him not to lose, and so he died trying to keep it.

TRIXIE.

I.

Trixie was a little girl of 12 with a dark curly mop of hair, black eyes, and very wild. Her mother absolutely didn't know how to manage her and her brothers. She had 2, Cicil and Frank, and two wild young cousins, Dora and Gerald. All the children were brought up together and were awfully naughty. For instance, they would think nothing of going into the conservatory and smash the flowers playing brigans. Now they all lived in a very big house in the country. But I must start with my story as I myself am getting awfully sick of the introduction.

II.

"Trixie—Trixie—boys, will you come in! It is the hour for you to get ready for ze lunch."

Trixie heard the voice of Fraulein but

took no notice. "Come," she said, "let's go and hide in our den."

"Right! What a good idea," answered Gerald. "I'm not a bit hungry, are you, kids?" he said, starting to run at full speed down the drive and through the bushes to a small-sized, dirty-looking hut.

"Dora—Trixie—vill you come in, I vill go and tell your mother and vather if you will not come in," came Frau's small voice from the distance.

"Go!" shouted back Cicil. "We aren't afraid, you old sneak."

Frau's steps were heard coming down the avenue. "I know ver you are; you is in de hut, de hut vull of bats and spider. I vill not come in, but you must come out, or I vill go and tell madame your mother."

"Oh! you old sneak," burst out Frank. "But all the same, we had better cut along now. Mother and father will nearly have finished lunch." So the children scampered back.

"Children, how dare you be so late?" said Mrs. Ross sternly; "did you not hear Fraulein calling you?" "Oh, yes, we heard her all right, but you see we didn't feel hungry," said Cicil calmly.

"Cicil, Frank, and Gerald shall go to the punishment room and learn six pages of Latin," said Mr. Ross rising. He paused, but continued: "As to the girls, they shall have absolutely the same; but instead of Latin they shall be put in their room with six pages of German"; and with that he left the room with his wife.

III.

"Are you awake?" A clumsy hand shook Dora. "Do wake up, stupid; don't you know it's twelve o'clock. Mother and father are sound asleep, and we mean to romp"—and a wet spunge came down on Dora's face.

"Do shut up! I'll wake up in a minute if you don't all stand round shouting and shaking me for all you're worth."

In a few moments we were all together and started having a pillow fight in the nursery. All of a sudden a splash of water caught Cicil on the face; of course all of us went and got water-gugs and you never saw such a mess as we made.

"I do hope no one will come up: we have got in a row 5 times this week," said Gerald.

"I believe you're afraid, you funk," cried Frank, as he threw a gallon of water at him.

"No, he's not," cried Trixie. "Cave! Here comes someone." All of us flew, but in a few moments the door opened and in stepped Father. "Children," he said, "I am ashamed of you. I knew you were naughty, but this beats all. I never thought it would come to this sort of thing late at night. You shall all go to school next month, and there I hope you will become better children. Back to bed all of you, and not another word."

"What rot!" echoed from all as the door closed.

IV.

"Good-bye, dear, and be good children," said Mrs. Ross, as the train puffed out. "I will try," said Trixie, as she blew a kiss to her mother.

So here ends my story, and Trixie was always a good little girl. But sometimes she was naughty, and she would remember the promise she made her mother, "I will be good," and she would be sweet again.

APPENDIX

SOME GHOSTS OF MY FRIENDS

I.

NANCY.

"THIS house," Monica told me impressively, "is stuffed with ghosts; they walk all over the old wing in crowds."

"That's where your bed-room is," added Sylvia pointedly.

"Oh, please don't let them begin talking about the ghosts again," cried May. "I know they'll do it all the evening now. Can't I not go to bed to-night? For pity's sake, can't I sleep with you, Monica?"

"You may sleep with me," said Monica, who was evidently laying herself out for a ghostly debauch, "if you promise to lie as quiet as a mouse when you wake up to-morrow morning, and not wake me up too."

"If I was a mouse you wouldn't lie quiet very long," said the practical May; and then we blew out the school-room lamp and conjured up the ghosts of the old Northumbrian Castle till I felt inclined to protest on May's behalf. But the babe had been sung to sleep with these legends in her cradle, and

knew them all by heart, and her preliminary terror was only an artistic touch of colour lent to the opening scene. To find a man who had never heard their stories before, and was possibly susceptible to alarm, and must subsequently sleep in the midst of their ghostly heroes and heroines, was just nuts to these three small ladies.

I did my duty, I hope, in the matter of shudders and thrills and notes of exclamation, but speaking *en connoisseur*, the ghosts, with one or two exceptions, were a trifle too noisy to be impressive. The children's favourite was a gentleman of the early eighteenth century whose custom it was in life to go out before breakfast and slay seven or eight Scots, and come home saying: "Fie on this quiet life! I want work." He now walked the stairs, it appeared, brandishing his sword, muttering, and—a practice which somewhat restricted the hostess in making up her house parties—slashing at any Scots folk who passed him by. We talked a good deal about this person, who was certainly the noisiest ghost I ever met in fact or fiction. In contemptible contrast (in the story-teller's mind) to this spirited gentleman were various quiet persons who walked about and looked

at you appealingly, as if asking for some help. There was a woman who was reported to have hidden the family jewels in the '45 Rebellion, and to have died before she could reveal their hiding-place: a child called Nancy, who had been ill-treated by her mother; and an old man who had betrayed the hiding-place of two priests to a Protestant mob of Charles I.'s day. They struck me, especially Nancy, as capable of producing a thrill or two under more dramatic treatment, but we passed them over rather lightly in order to return to the sword-brandishing Border warrior. The conclusion of the séance came prematurely, the romantic atmosphere being rudely dissipated by the concluding incident. A stern-looking north-country woman appeared in the school-room at seven o'clock, requesting "Miss Sylvia" to "come to bed at once." I saw that something was wrong, and looked aside discreetly, while Sylvia protested that it was only seven o'clock.

"Have you forgotten," asked the new-comer, sternly, "that you are to come to bed to-night and to-morrow night at seven?"

"Oh," sighed Sylvia, "no; but I hoped you had."

A cold command to make haste was the only reply, followed by an undignified scene of kicking and screaming, and concluding with the exit of Miss Sylvia in the arms of her nurse, a whirling tornado of brown curls and white lace garments. I do not know whether May detected in my face any other feeling than seemly grief and reprobation, but she assured me in tones of jealous pride, "I'm *often* naughty like that."

I went to bed early, and slept soundly and undisturbed, coming down, therefore, in the morning with the feeling that I should be met with disapproval and almost with contempt in the schoolroom. Such, in fact, proved to be the case, and I heard no more that day about the ghosts; their patrons evidently thinking me an unprofitable auditor if, at the end of such an evening's preparation, I could do no better than pass the night in mere sleep.

But the following night, when I went to my room, there was work to be done; and as no occupation is too trivial when its object is the postponement of work, I walked round the panelled walls, lifting the mouldy, colourless tapestry which covered them in places, fingering some empty cabinets, and generally

exploring. The exploration yielding no result, except a great deal of dust and a slight pleasing suspicion that one of the panels could be opened if there were time to investigate it, I pulled the table in front of the fire, put two candles on it, and sat down to write a fairy story.

The clock struck one, and two; the fire was going out, and it was too much trouble to put coal on, though a north-east sea wind was rattling at the windows and creeping in through many a crack and cranny. The supreme silence which reigned over the house, except when the sea wind shook walls and windows, brought back memories of the children's stories, and the moment of their return was rather a nervous one. Yet this work must be finished to-night; and I went on with it, refusing with an effort even to look round at my bed, the thoughts of which were so enticing. I would write steadily on; I would not look round—would not look round at what? There was no thought of bed in my mind when I repeated the words to myself. I did not want to look round, and could not work. That, however, was a state of mind which for business reasons could not be allowed to continue. I turned and looked.

A child was standing at the foot of the bed, a little maid of about eleven, in a long dark frock, with short sleeves and a wide flounce of old English lace round it. Her face was white and not pretty ; her hair hung down in long straight lines, and her hands, folded in front of her, were white and thin, with the veins showing blue in them. She was standing there quite quietly, looking at me, and did not move when I got up.

The apparition was not a very frightening one, and my chief thought about it at the moment was that it would please the children to-morrow. They would have preferred the sword-brandishing person, but this was better than nothing. Who was it ?

" Are you Nancy ? " I asked.

The child-figure answered no word, only its sad grey eyes looked at me with a shade more of life in them. I glanced away for a moment, presuming that this apparition was merely the result of late hours and Monica's stories, and willing to give every chance to science. In truth, when I looked back, the figure had left the bottom of the bed, but it was only moving towards the far wall. To my great satisfaction it went to the panel

which I had suspected of a capacity for opening, and stood there for a moment. All the lore gathered from seers and ghost books forsook me in this emergency, and I quite forgot that I ought to have followed. The small maiden looked at me for a moment, sorrowfully and reproachfully; then she vanished.

A feeling that the school-room would hardly say thank you for such a story, coupled with another vague idea that my little visitor might be unhappy if she were the subject of chatter and laughter among this houseful of people, held me silent next day about her. Perhaps as a reward for this she came back next night, and stood for a moment at the bottom of the bed, and then moved towards the wall with appeal in her eyes. My manners came back to me, and I followed her to the panel; and when she vanished through it, I made various clumsy attempts to open it. But no sign of an opening could be found, and at this hour of the night decent regard for one's fellow creatures forbade an attempt to kick it down. I went to bed in a temper, resolving that the panel should be opened to-morrow, even if it had to stay open all night and admit the

whole army of Monica's ghosts, from the anti-Scot demonstrator downwards.

Next day, however, the question was settled in the simplest possible way. I asked Monica for more details about Nancy, whose history she had slurred over so slightingly on the evening of my arrival; and Monica, weary of such a long silence about her favourite ghosts, and thankful for anyone who would take an intelligent interest even in the least exciting of them, told me the child's story. She and her brother had been objects of bitter hatred to a stepmother, whose own children they would prevent from inheriting a title and large estate. She had resolved to get rid of them, and had apparently succeeded. The boy had fought on the English side in the '45 Rebellion and had been killed; and the sister, a sickly scared child, had died of ill-treatment. There was an old letter among the family papers describing how the writer had found Nancy living alone day and night in two rooms in a deserted, tumble-down part of the house, ill with cold and starvation, seeing and speaking to nobody except the evil woman whose visits to her were always followed by outcries and sobs which the

servants talked about in frightened voices. When she was between eleven and twelve Nancy died. One of the rooms described in the letter was apparently the room in which I was sleeping, the other being connected with it by a sliding door and short passage, which Monica proposed to show me. The panel opened readily enough under the accustomed fingers of my guide, and we passed on into the next room.

It was a smaller room than the other, unused and completely neglected. Two chairs stood against the wall, their covering moth-eaten and stained. The window was cobwebbed over so that the dull light of the winter afternoon could hardly struggle through its dark panes, while the mouldy curtains hanging over it tore into holes at a touch. The floor was bare, and in the middle of it stood a round empty table thick with dust. There were some curious three-cornered drawers in the table, which swung open sideways instead of allowing themselves to be pulled out; and we looked into them hurriedly, hastening to see what was to be seen while the fast-dying daylight lasted. In the first two drawers were only scraps

of paper; in the third was more paper, and a small square picture-book with old-fashioned coloured prints of prim-looking children playing various games. Some of the pictures were crinkled as if they had been wetted, and I passed my fingers gently over the pages, thankful to think that the little reader's tears had been long since dried. The next and last drawer was locked, and as I moved it about, wondering how readily the lock would yield, I felt Monica's hand suddenly clasped on my arm with a clutch of terror; her face was gone ashen white, and her frightened eyes were staring into a corner of the room. Following their look I saw Nancy there. She was standing very quietly with her hands folded in front of her, but there was a new look of contentment on her face as if she were thankful that we had found our way at last to this lonely prison-room. Peering forward I saw for a moment the quaintly-dressed little lady, and the grey eyes with this new light of pleasure in them; then the figure vanished. I turned to console my weeping, trembling companion, who was protesting that she didn't mind seeing a ghost, but this one had "come in so quietly." Unfastening the locked drawer seemed the

best chance of making her forget her fears; there must be something interesting in it, we agreed, or, perhaps, something which Nancy wanted. With one or two vigorous pulls we wrenched the drawer open. It drew out lengthways like an ordinary specimen of its kind; but two very blank faces stared into it when open, for it was empty. Then with a simultaneous flash of intelligence—Monica and I are the same age really, though I have lived in the world a few more years than she has—I and my companion began to feel about for the spring which should open one of those secret drawers familiar to so many generations of youth. We found it at last; it was but an ill-fitting false back to the drawer, an amateurish-looking affair; and with vague awe we picked up a small wooden doll which was lying there. Its face was wooden, the features and hair being merely painted on, and the arms and legs were unbending and roughly shaped, resembling in no way the graceful and agile limbs of its modern descendants. It was dressed in clothes which, although made of coarse material, were evidently, even to the male eye, possessed of some striking feature of superiority over ordinary dolls' clothes. It was Monica who pointed

out to me at last that every garment was covered with the most beautiful needlework, which must, she explained, have taken months and months to do; and my little companion fell into a silence, turning over and studying each garment with sympathising admiring eyes, and holding it up for me to see. The last ray of daylight was dying away as she and I stretched out our hands thus across the centuries to touch the little fingers which had worked at this lonely task, and then I brought my thoughts back to the table and drawer, and to a piece of paper which was lying in the latter, half covered with round, faded child-writing. Monica and I took it to the window, and having sacrificed a handkerchief to the removal of a few cobwebs, we read the sheet, which was something in the nature of a last will and testament:

"Betty has told me to-night that I am very ill and perhaps I shall die. If I die I want my doll to be buried with me. She is the only person I love in the world, and the only person who loves me.—NANCY."

The instantaneous action proposed by Monica was not possible, for certain reasons of politeness; but the permission of various

authorities having been obtained next day, the doll was buried as near as possible to the little maid who had come to us in this regulation ghostly fashion to plead that her last wish might be carried out.

II.

THE NIGHT-LAUNDRESSES.

1

AMONG the towns and villages of Southern Brittany, where tourists wander, starved and solitary but resolute to explore, Auray has points of superiority. It is a shade less dirty and many degrees less dreary than its companion villages; eatable food is to be procured by the man who does not too soon despairingly abandon search for it; and the sights of the neighbourhood are not merely such as are to be found, incomparably better arranged by art and nature, in every country-side in England, but are clean-smelling and original. Peasant-folk, too, wear their Breton costume for their own comfort and not only for the amusement of visitors; civilisation has just reached the point where cleanliness begins; and, above all other merits, the strong Atlantic winds sweep across the plains of Quiberon and Carnac, bringing to Auray

the fresh salt breath which banishes even the memory of previous Breton dwelling-places.

It was this last consideration which had induced Geoffrey Vernon to bring his child here—the nervous little white-faced babe whose frail life was fought for month by month, and whose eight years seemed to her father to have been eight victories snatched from Fate by long desperate fighting. The prescription of "quiet and fresh air, with some occasional unexciting novelty" seemed to be well met by this comfortable Breton town, where the dress of every passer-by was a matter of ever-fresh interest to childish eyes, and the breeze blowing down the river brought the songs of fishermen in weird unknown language and high unfamiliar tones.

Woods and fields along the river banks were slowly darkening in the June evening, and faint breaths of a scented evening wind broke through the trees, cooling the hot bracken and sunburnt flowers. Vernon and his child had left the long hotel dinner half finished to come for a stroll, and the little one, tired by the first hot day of summer, was slowly reviving in these cool breezes. She had begun one of the long rambling fairy-stories with which she beguiled such walks,

Vernon's attention being at liberty to wander as it pleased during the narration, so long as he occasionally threw in a word of surprise and interest. It was wandering now in realms of unwonted contentment, for the quiet beauty of woodland and river was soothing his strained nerves, and yesterday a local doctor had told him that Kathleen was certainly better.

"And then," went on the soft monotone at his side, "God gave the angel a bun——"

"My dear Kitty! What on earth—I mean," added Vernon, subsiding from his startled exclamation into stammering apology for it, "I mean, why did the angel want it just then?"

"I told you," said the narrator reproachfully, "that he was to have it directly he came back. Of course he would want it after that long, long journey."

"Oh yes, of course. Would you," asked the man with sudden inspiration, "like one when you get home? We will buy some on the way back."

Kathleen nodded her head approvingly. Her stories mostly reproduced the events of the day, improved and coloured according to her own preferences; and if you wanted to

know her wishes for the immediate future or her ideal of bliss in general you had but to attend more closely than usual to one of these narratives. To-night the angels in her elaborately described paradise had been dressed in Breton costume, had been cool all day, had dined with their fathers at a real late dinner, gone for a long walk afterwards, and been rewarded as above-mentioned on their return. Gratified that her half-conscious wishes should have been so rapidly divined by her sympathetic audience, Kitty walked on for a few minutes in silence, and then began another story. Suddenly she stopped and shrank against her father's side, whispering in scared tones :—

"Look, father, look! Who are they?"

Startled out of another reverie by the fear in the child's voice Vernon noticed, first, that he had wandered much farther from Auray than he had intended, and that it was growing dark and presumably late ; secondly that among the trees by the riverside three figures, vague in the twilight, were engaged in some silent work. The stream was narrow here and curved sharply to the right, the figures being on the far side of the curve ; but, standing still and peering through the

gloom, Vernon saw that they were three women kneeling by the water's edge and washing clothes.

"I—I don't like them, father; come away, oh, do come away!"

Vernon had been watching the women in silence and with some interest, surprised at the lonely spot and late hour which they had chosen for their work; and he was about to go forward and speak to them when the keen terror in the child's voice checked him. He looked down with a smile:

"Of course we will go away if you like, my baby," he said, "but they are only laundresses, you know, washing clothes; maybe they are washing something of yours —perhaps that frock which you made such a mess of at Carnac yesterday, eh, little Kitty? Well, now we will go home and tell nurse that it is being washed!"

As the man's voice ceased, something in the profound silence which followed struck him as curious. Perhaps the growing terror of the little child was affecting him, perhaps the fast falling darkness intensified it, but the silence was curious. Working steadily on, with arms and faces bent over their linen, the women rubbed and washed and

wrung the clothes; and yet under the wide grey night sky there was not the faintest sound but the quick frightened breathing of the two onlookers. With a violent effort Vernon flung off some odd fascination which was holding him to the spot, and turned to go, the child doing the same; but a sudden movement among the laundresses caught their eyes, and they both looked round again. One of the women was standing up; through the twilight Vernon could just see her white face and dark eyes turned towards him. In one hand she was holding a narrow white robe like a child's nightgown, and in the other a long broad strip of linen. A sensation of meaningless but overwhelming horror seized Vernon suddenly as he looked, and with incoherent exclamations he caught up the terrified child in his arms and fled homeward.

2

"Tell me, Monsieur:" the landlady of the hotel came into Vernon's sitting-room on some slight pretext, and after hovering round him for a few moments spoke in an awe-struck undertone: "Is it true what the little one has told her nurse, that you and

she have seen—oh, Monsieur, it cannot be so! —that you have seen the *laveuses de nuit?*"

Vernon looked up with a nervous smile, half-vexed at the memory of his recent alarm, half-amused at the woeful voice in which Madame referred to its cause. "We certainly saw three laundresses washing clothes," he said, "and certainly it was at night."

"And she says, your poor baby, that one of them held up her little shroud and winding-sheet."

Vernon's book dropped on the floor with a crash, and he sprang to his feet; "You mad fool!" he said, advancing towards the woman with clenched threatening hands; "what are you talking about? Mademoiselle Kathleen said—what?"

"She did but describe what the woman held up: she understands nothing," said Madame hastily; "but of course we who know. . . . Is it possible that Monsieur has never heard of the night-laundresses of Auray, who on the last night of each month wash and prepare the shrouds and winding-sheets of those who are to die during the coming month? Oh pardon, Monsieur; a thousand times I ask pardon for telling you

the meaning of what you saw to-night! Too soon you must know!"

"More superstitions!" said the man loudly and angrily, but with white lips and husky voice; "there is no end to them, I think, in this country! Their nonsense has ceased even to amuse me. Go away, woman; and if you dare to tell this story to Mademoiselle or her nurse. . . .!"

3

He had gone out next morning to buy the the child some fruit and flowers — some grapes, and the white pansies which she loved and of which her garden at home was full. As he came into the room, with the doctor for whom he had sent, and caught sight of the small pinched face fallen back on the sofa-cushion, with one soft brown lock of hair lying across it, he saw what had happened, and the two men came forward very gently.

Vernon put the pansies into the chilled little hands, and stood there looking down. A roughly framed picture of the Good Shepherd hung above the sofa, looking down too; some doves in a cage near by

were cooing softly ; a white kitten lay asleep nestling under the dead child's arm. What shock could come from such a sight? What place had outcries, and tears, and mourning here? More softly than the dew falls, rest had come to one more over-tired child, and the *laveuses de nuit* of Auray had, as he knew, made all things ready for her long sleep.

III.

WYEMARKE DARCY'S TALE OF THE CHILD IN WHITE.

MY birthday is at the end of December, five days after Christmas Day. When I was little I had a Christmas-tree and a conjurer; but now Jim says that the sight of a conjurer makes him want to sit down on the floor and howl with misery. So on the birthday when I was twelve I had a fancy-dress dance after the Christmas-tree; and on my new birthday, when I was going to be thirteen, mother told me I might have another. We are in the country at Christmas, in North Staffordshire. A good number of children live all round us, and we invite some others to stay with us for my birthday and New Year's Day; so there are plenty of people at the party. It is lovely fun to plan dresses for yourself, and to hear what everyone else is going to wear. For weeks and weeks beforehand every child I meet says to me, "Oh, Wyemarke! I

have thought of such a lovely dress to wear at your party! Guess what it is"; or, "Oh, Wyemarke! I am coming to your party as Little Bo-Peep, with a sheep on wheels which 'baas' when you pull its head down. Do you think anyone else will think of that too?" This year I was going to be Harriet out of *Struwelpeter*, with two long plaits of hair and red shoes, and Jim was going to be Shock-Headed Peter himself. Kitty, who was seven last October, said she would be Helen of Troy. She didn't want to be vain, only she wanted to wear a Greek dress. Afterwards she said she would be the bathing-woman at Llandudno and "dip" some of the children; but at last she agreed to be a robin, and Jim was to throw crumbs to her. Jim told me he was going to get some worms for her, too, but I persuaded him not to. Esther Estcourt, Kitty's best friend, who is seven too, came to stay with us, and was going to be a green parrot. Kitty promised at first to hold out sugar to her, but when Esther went about all over the house saying that Kitty could only wear common brown stockings, while she herself would wear scarce green ones, Kitty said she wouldn't hold the sugar,

but would peck at Esther with her beak instead.

Our house is rather a big one, and very old. It has got nearly sixty bedrooms in it, and so many passages and turnings and little staircases that grown-up visitors are constantly getting lost in it; and when we have children staying there, Jim and I and Nurse spend half the evening taking them to their rooms, and looking for them after they have tried to come down to tea by themselves. Mostly, unless they find someone at the end of the second passage, they sit down and begin to cry, so it is easy, but sad, to find them; but sometimes they wander for half an hour and get dreadfully frightened. Jim says he expects that anyone who thoroughly explored the house this Christmas would find several children left over from last year, who had never been heard of since.

Twenty-eight children came to stay with us this year for the party. Mother is an extraordinary person. Whenever she hears me or Kitty or Jim say we like a boy or girl, she remembers it, and long afterwards tells us to invite them to something; and she always says we don't have half enough

friends and must be so dull sometimes. Kitty and I really only just knew some of the children who came this time, and I wondered at their liking to come; but most likely they just wanted to come to a party. Yesterday, when Lady Muriel Estcourt asked Kitty and Esther how they could want to go to a very dull tea-party at Farleigh, when they had been to three awfully nice parties this week, Kitty said: "We just want to go to every party in the world"; and I remember I used to feel like that years ago. Some of these children were rather funny. I heard Eileen Fane (who is only eleven, but goes visiting with her mother in a lot of big country houses) say to her sister just after they had arrived, "I shall have tea in my room, and shan't show till this evening." And another said to me, "Can I have tea up here with my Nanna this afternoon? I've got some new heads for my dolls, and new frocks for them, and I want my Nanna to put them on."

A rather curious thing happened to me on the evening when the children arrived. But I must explain to you that, however exciting the adventure became afterwards, I thought nothing at all about this beginning

of it, and only remembered it two days later. It was about half-past six in the evening. We had all finished tea, and I was coming upstairs to see Ermyntrude, and ask if she had finished the dolls' heads, when I saw a child standing in the gallery at the top of the stairs. The gallery is a very long one, full of old armour and old tapestry, and it is rather badly lighted; but a lot of passages lead into it, so children are always wandering into it and getting frightened. I stood at the top of the stairs, and called to this child, "Are you lost? This is the way downstairs." But she took no notice. Then I went a few steps down the gallery, saying, "Are you looking for the way downstairs? It is at this end," but the child neither moved nor spoke. It was rather odd. I stopped and looked at her. She seemed to be about twelve years old, and was extraordinarily pretty, with lovely cheeks, ivory-coloured and pink, and great eyes which shone in the dusk, and bright, soft, gold hair. Her dress was an old-fashioned one of white brocade, coming almost down to her feet; and she had bare, white arms, and white shoes with old jewelled buckles; but I did not know her. Suddenly

it got very silent. The wind moaned through the roof high above us as I stood there; sleet rattled against the big stained-glass windows; from far away came the voices and laughter of the other children, who had begun some game; and just for a moment, without the slightest reason, I felt frightened. Then, without making a sound, the child moved towards one of the passages, and I shook myself to shake away the silly fear which had come to me, and ran after her. Probably one of the children whom I knew least had been trying on her fancy dress, and had wandered out here in search of big looking-glasses. I would take her to the Venetian corridor, which was lined with looking-glasses. But when I reached the passage she was gone into her room, I supposed, and again I stood still, feeling funnily scared and nervous. Then I saw Ermyntrude and her nurse, and ran to them and forgot all about the other child.

My birthday party was such fun, and everyone enjoyed themselves so much that it was very late before we went to bed. It must have been nearly midnight when mother and I went upstairs, with my little terrier, Ping, running on in front. Mother

was just saying, "That boy Frank Anstruther is a charmingly candid person. I left three blocks of chocolate on the library table this morning, and this afternoon, after tea, two of them had disappeared. As I saw Mr. Frank's mouth framed in a rich brown framework of chocolate, I drew my own conclusion, and said to him, 'This morning there were three blocks of chocolate on this table; now there is only one. How do you account for that?' He said in tones of grief and surprise, 'Oh, Lady Darcy! It was getting so dark that I didn't see the third piece.' He wanted consolation, it appeared, because while he was trying to ride the new roan pony this afternoon he 'bubbled off,' to use his own expressive phrase, and damaged a good deal of his anatomy. We must tell Morris not to —Wyemarke, what on earth is the matter with Ping?"

We had reached the top of the stairs, and Ping was standing there shivering and growling, with his ears cocked and his eyes staring. When we were on the last step he ran back towards us, looking down the gallery, whining and trembling as if he were terrified out of his wits. I looked where he

was looking, and saw the child in the white brocade dress standing there again, leaning against the high iron railing of the gallery, looking down into the hall. Only two lights were left in the gallery now, and we could hardly see her face; but her eyes and her gold curls and white arms shone in the gloom so that I recognised her. Perhaps Ping's terror made me feel funny; perhaps I was tired after my birthday; but suddenly, for some reason or other, I felt most dreadfully frightened, and caught hold of mother's arm and tried to drag her away. She put an arm round me, holding me tight, while I pointed to the child, who was moving away now towards her passage, and tried to tell mother about her. But mother only glanced down the gallery and then looked at me in a puzzled sort of way, keeping an arm round me. "Did one of the children come out into the gallery?" she asked at last, very quietly. "Someone in a long white brocade dress? Oh, it must have been Phyllis come out of her room to see if there was any more fun going on. Little monkey! Set her a good example, dearest, and come to bed."

I ran down the gallery and looked up the

passage where the child had gone, but there was no one there, so I came back to my own bedroom, and mother stayed with me till I was in bed, and at last half persuaded me to believe that she had seen the child too, and that it was only Phyllis. But in the inside of my mind I knew it wasn't Phyllis. I daren't think what had really happened, and I was pretty thankful when mother came to me again in the night and let me tell her all about it. But she said people who were very tired and excited often saw things like that, and I was to stop crying and go to sleep, and stay in bed for breakfast.

In the morning there was nothing much to do after I had got up. Most of the children had stayed in bed to breakfast like me; most of those who had got up had gone out skating with Jim. I wandered about the rooms with Muriel and Vera. They are two very nice children of about eleven, quite pretty, and great friends of mine; so when they said they wanted to see all over the house I took them. Some of the rooms are hardly ever used, and have a cold, fusty smell about them. We were hurrying through one of these to get into the wing where Prince Charles Edward and his general,

Lord George Murray, fortified themselves in 1745, because they expected to be attacked after leaving Derby, when I stopped and stared in front of me in amazement. Over the mantel-piece was a picture which I may have seen before, though I never remember coming into this room, but I had not noticed it till now. The whole house is full of family portraits, and they are not very interesting. This was a big picture of two children—one a boy of about fifteen, tall and splendidly handsome, holding a plumed hat in one hand, and the other hand resting on his sister's shoulder. The child by his side was a girl of about twelve, with gold curls and dark lovely eyes, and a complexion as clear and pink as rose-petals ; her arms were bare, and she was dressed in a long white brocade dress, coming down to her feet.

I can hardly tell you what sort of feeling came over me when I recognised the child whom I had seen twice in the gallery. Partly I felt sick with terror, partly I was excited at an adventure coming to me, and partly I had a nervous feeling that the two children must want me to do something for them. But, besides all that, I stood there thinking how lovely they were, dainty-

looking, proud, beautifully dressed, and yet a little sad, and I wondered who they were, Muriel tried to pull me on; but I had thought of something, and asked her and Vera to see the rest of the house after lunch. An old housekeeper of ours, who knew everything about the house and the story of every picture in it, and who lived in the village now, and came up to see us occasionally when there were a lot of people, would probably be here this morning. I ran to the housekeeper's room, and, finding her there, persuaded her to come to the picture with me and tell me about the children in it. She is a funny old person. I have told you about her in the book I wrote called 'Wyemarke's Mother,' and how she used to show visitors the picture of Lord Bacon in the dining-room and say, "This is a portrait of Lord Bacon, ladies and gentlemen, who invented gunpowder, they tell me; and, in my opinion, he might have been better employed." She mixed him up with the Bacon who did invent gunpowder. But she did not often make mistakes like that, and some of her stories were very exciting. This one was, and Muriel and Vera stayed to listen to it. She said:

"Eh, dearie, what'n you doing playing here without a fire! You'll get your deaths. That picture? Dear heart, but look at the dust in the frame! It'll rot away before Mr. Jim's a grown man. Well, missies, the picture tells a pretty story of the two youngest children of Sir Granville Darcy, your great-great-grandfather, Miss Wyemarke. Sir Granville hated George II. because—for a reason which it's not for a little girl to know, dearie; and more for that than for any other reason he joined Prince Charles Edward, with all his family and tenants, when his Highness came south, and swore he'd make the Prince King of England right away. All you little ladies know, or should know if you've kept to your books as you ought, that the rebellion didn't amount to much in England, and the Prince had to go back to Scotland; and on the way his Highness slept here, and was attacked here one night by some English troops. Next morning my Lord George Murray and the main body of the Scots army went on marching northwards again; but the Prince stayed here because—well, that's not for a little girl to know either, dearie. Sir Granville Darcy, with all his men, went with Lord George,

leaving only Mr. Rupert Darcy, the boy in this picture, to guard the house. The Prince, with two attendants and some friends, spent another day and night in two rooms in the tower, Mr. Rupert lying hidden in a secret chamber where he could see the hall and two entrances to the Castle, and hear everything which might mean danger. 'Tis said that even the servants all left the Castle—the men to march with Sir Granville, the women because they daren't stay here alone. Next day the Prince and his friends had done with their drinking and sinfulness, and went away without a word to Mr. Rupert Darcy. Sir Granville Darcy with his eldest son were killed fighting, and Mr. Rupert was never seen again. My Lady Darcy had gone to Paris to some Scots relations of her own there, taking little Miss Margery Darcy with her. Mr. Rupert and Miss Margery loved one another above everything on earth; she had hardly been separated from him for a day since she was born; and when he disappeared, and it became certain that he must have been killed in battle or by some accident, Miss Margery just pined away and died."

"There are tears in her eyes in the picture," said Muriel, in a whisper.

"Yes, missie. The story goes that the picture was not finished when the fighting began; and after the rebellion was over the painter finished Mr. Rupert's portrait from memory, Miss Margery helping him. The work was done in the room where we are now. Miss Margery would stand for hours looking at the picture, dressed always in the white dress which she had worn while standing with her brother. Little wonder if the painter saw her eyes with tears in them when her own portrait came to be finished."

"I wish she was alive now so that we might tell her how sorry we are for her," said Muriel.

"'Tis a hundred and fifty years ago and more, missie, and she's gone long since where all tears are dried. I doubt but she was glad enough to go if Mr. Rupert was waiting for her on the other side."

There was one question I wanted to ask, but for some reason it was a moment or two before I dared. At last I managed to whisper, "Where was the secret room where Rupert was hidden?"

"No one knows, Miss Wyemarke; but I mind my mother telling me, when I was

a little girl, that she had heard there was a secret room leading out of the gallery near the head of the stairs. And there is an old story—but such tales aren't for little girls to hear, dearie."

I implored Mrs. Atkins to tell us; at first she refused, but at last she said, rather unwillingly:

"The tale goes that on two or three evenings at the end of the year the ghost of Miss Margery Darcy may be seen in the gallery by children of the family. She is dressed as she is in her picture, and is trying to show the way to the secret room where her brother watched before his death."

I told mother the story, and it was easy to see how puzzled and vexed she was. She begged me to tell no one what I had seen, and told me to forget all about it; but for the rest of the day neither she nor I could attend to anybody for thinking of Margery Darcy. As I was coming down to tea that evening, with Muriel and Vera and Ermyntrude, I saw Margery again; so I told the others to go on downstairs, and stayed behind and watched her. It was impossible to believe one was looking at a ghost; she

seemed just an ordinary child looking down into the hall. Only, she stood very still, and when I went a little nearer to her, and she neither moved nor spoke nor looked at me, it did make me feel rather creepy. At last she turned towards the passage, and in turning looked at me, her big sorrowful eyes just resting on me for a moment with such a look in them as might be in the eyes of a little child who is dreadfully sad, but cannot tell you why. I ran towards her as she moved away. I saw her go up the passage, and I reached the corner of the passage just in time to see her stand for a second or two against a piece of the wall; then I turned my head for a moment, half-meaning to call to someone whom I heard coming, and when I looked round again she had vanished.

The person coming down the passage was mother. She had a measure and a hammer in her hand, and had been hanging the two drawings which Jim gave her for a Christmas present. She said to me rather sharply, "What are you doing there, Wyemarke?" and looked very vexed when I told her. Then she tried to laugh at me, and said: "The accepted way of discovering a secret chamber

is to hammer along the wall till it sounds hollow. I arrive with a most appropriate hammer, and proceed to do it. The result, I fear—listen—is the hardest and most hopelessly solid sound. Here, where you think your little lady vanished, it is even more solid. Listen again. Do you suppose—oh!"

Mother had been tapping the hammer all along the wall, and for a few moments it sounded quite thick and dull. Then suddenly there was a sound as though the hammer had passed from a solid stone wall on to a thick wooden door, and the tapping sounded quite hollow. Mother's face went scarlet and then very white, and we stood looking at one another, hardly trying to hide how frightened we were. At last mother said very hurriedly, "Come away, Wyemarke; we must speak to father about this. Please not a word to anybody else," and of course I promised. But at tea an idea struck me suddenly, and I ran up to the gallery afterwards and examined two of the passages leading out of it. Two rooms lay between them, but these rooms were so dark, being lighted only from a very small, high courtyard, that they were hardly ever used.

For that reason, perhaps, no one had ever noticed that one of them was very small, and did not nearly reach back to the gallery wall. There must, if one came to think of it, be a big space between the wall of this room and the wall of the gallery.

Of course, nothing could happen while the house was full of people, but directly they had gone father had the wall opened, and he let me be there. The paper came off easily, and under it was what looked like a solid level wall. But part of it, we knew, was an oak panel, which probably opened by a secret spring, and we tried hard to find the spring. It was no good, however, and the panel had to be broken down, which took a long time, as it was heavy and very strongly fastened. Directly it was down, father and the two workmen went inside with a lantern, and as they stayed a long time mother and I went in too. I only caught sight of some clothes, and a sword black with rust lying on the floor; then father muttered something, and mother put an arm round me and made me come away. She looked white and dreadfully frightened. A moment afterwards father came out with a piece of parchment in his hand. He nodded his head, and said,

"It is Rupert Darcy right enough. Look here."

There was writing on the parchment on both sides. On one side was a lot of old Latin, which was quite plain and clear. Father said Rupert must have found this piece of parchment in the room, and written on the back of it with a stick, which he burnt at the end so as to blacken it. The stick was lying near his sword. His writing was faint and straggling, as if he could hardly hold the stick; it was dreadful to think how weak and hungry and desparing he must have been. This is what he wrote:

"I, Rupert Darcy, who am on guard in Norton Castle, have discovered that by some accident the door of this secret chamber is shut fast, the spring refusing its work; and, not daring to beat on the door and cry for help lest the English soldiers should hear me, I sit down to write this my last will and testament, and thereafter to face death with courage and resignation.

"To"—[a name was carefully scratched out here, and the other words added. Probably Rupert was afraid that some English soldiers might find the paper, and learn that Prince Charles Edward was in the Castle]—

"one who is in the tower-room, I offer my undying and faithful loyalty, hoping that my imprisonment here may not bring any danger to him. I would that I could have died in his more active service.

"To my honoured parents, Sir Granville and Lady Darcy, I offer my love and respect, humbly entreating their pardon for all wherein I have caused them trouble and vexation, and thanking them for their love and patience towards me.

"To my elder brother, James Charles Darcy, I bequeath my sword and the chain given me by Princess Henriette of Bourbon. And I beg his forgiveness for the foolish quarrel which he will remember on All Saints' Day.

"To my darling sister, Margery Charlotte Darcy, I give my most tender and eternal love, which shall not die nor change till the day when she comes to me on the shores of that Land where I humbly pray that I may go to-night. And I bequeath to her the locket with her hair in it which is round my neck now, and which I mean to hold in my hand at the hour of death.

"And I beseech Almighty God, for His Son's sake, to forgive my sins against Him,

and to bring me, for Christ's sake, to Heaven to-night, and in His love and mercy to keep Margery safe and happy till she comes too, and to grant that the waiting for her may not seem very long."

The two workmen and mother and I listened to Rupert's will, and looked at one another in silence at the end of it; and in the silence I heard a long, soft sigh of contentment and relief from someone near us whom I could not see. I never saw Margery again.

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